

FAITHS THAT MOVED THE WORLD

*Dreams and Dramas in the
Search for God*

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Contents

In the Beginning

Dawn in Ancient Persia . . . ZOROASTRIANISM

The Law from Sinai . . . JUDAISM

Lao-Tze reveals the Path . . . TAOISM

Confucius and Moral Law . . . CONFUCIANISM

The Faith of Many Gods . . . HINDUISM

Buddha, the Enlightened . . . BUDDHISM

Liberation through Kindness . . . JAINISM

The Faith of a Nation . . . SHINTOISM

Great is Allah, the One God . . . MUHAMMADANISM

God as Love CHRISTIANITY

World without End

Credo: the essence of the Faith PRECEDING EACH CHA

The Wisdom of the Teachers AT THE END OF EACH CHA

Bibliography

IN THE BEGINNING

TWO thousand million years ago the earth was born.

For more than three-quarters of that inconceivable stretch of time no life moved on its surface. There in cosmic magnificence was played the terrible drama of its gradual cooling : the conflict of rocks and water, of vast masses of steam hissing into the unseen skies, of lightning-riven clouds, of rain roaring down, wearing low the mountains, forming great oceans, raging in tidal waves across the hot rocks as new volcanic disturbances tore open the surfaces and altered the land levels.

“And the earth was without form, and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

Millions of years passed. The clouds thinned and into this torment and chaos the blessed light of the sun streamed—light, the essential of life.

“And God said : Let there be light : and there was light.”

Thus, fifty million years ago, the first life stirred in the waters. The drama continued on a new stage. Form after form struggled into being, altered to meet the terrible demands of existence or died in its impotence to do so : sea-plants and minute bacteria, the first land-plants, and then, after æon upon æon, the one-celled creatures, the fish, the first amphibians, the reptiles, the earliest crude birds, the mammals.

“And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind.

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

And God said : Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind : and it was so.”

As the now established globe, racing on its orbit, tilted away from the sun, the ice ages again and again swept almost all life from vast regions, and millions of species died in these cataclysms of freezing darkness. But life somehow went on. Often the immensely strong things perished and some tiny organism carried on the burden of living. The giant dinosaurs, the brontosaurus, the tyrannosaurus, the bird-like pterodactyls, failed and fell behind ; and one of the weakest of the mammals, the least armed, the least armoured, one of the least swift in movement, slowly gained ascendancy. Less than half a million years ago Man moved to the centre of the cosmic stage.

"And God said : Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

"So God created man in His own image ; male and female created He them."

Man, with the thumbed hand which could grasp things and the brain which could look before and after ; Man, the creator of tools, the animal which altered environment to his own purpose instead of adapting himself to it ; Man, with the god-like function of understanding, of wonder, of curiosity ; Man, with the ultimate gift of language which gave him a world of established and communicable ideas wherein to dwell, as well as the outward physical world which he contacted through his senses.

"And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

"And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field."

To this strangest of all created things, endowed with this amazing power of understanding and considering things beyond his immediate needs of hunger and sex, came the first dim marvelling at this universe in which he found himself. Nature in all her terror and beauty and immensity he knew, and he sensed vaguely that there were powers behind nature ; the seasons in their wonderful unbroken rhythm he began to mark, and he felt that there was purpose behind that established order. Awe ; wonder ; a feeling, half fear, half assur-

ance ; most of all a deep curiosity to know more of this Thing behind things.; a dim understanding that if Man worked with Its purposes he lived, if he opposed them chaos would come again and he would die—a confused understanding from which the ideas of good and evil were born. So came the first strange rituals so that he might be linked with Its enormous doings ; sacrifices to propitiate Its favour ; terrible taboos upon anything which might call down Its punishment ; a special individual or group who were assumed to know Its will. So Good and Evil became linked with the powers of life and death. And so Man, as he gradually conquered his environment and won such sure foothold upon the earth as left him time to use the marvellous instrument of his mind for its most subtle purpose, made this study of the Power behind the Universe his greatest concern. Religion—the nature of God the Creator, the purpose of God, the meaning of Good and Evil—came into being.

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil."

C R E D O

THE BELIEF OF THE ZOROASTRIANS

*A*HURA MAZDA, the Spirit of Good, and Angra Mainyu, the Spirit of Evil, fight for mastery of the world. Man's soul is the ultimate battlefield. Therefore the call to every individual is to live the good life : to speak truth, be honest, be trustworthy, be generous and kind. Also to fight evil and the corruption of Angra Mainyu wherever it is found.

So shall the soul at death, if the good predominates, pass to the realm of everlasting light across a hair's-breadth bridge ; but the wicked shall be plunged into the abyss.

Thus Zoroaster taught, six hundred years before Christ ; so teaches the sacred scripture, the Zend-Avesta ; and so believe the Parsees and Zoroastrians of to-day, a final noble remnant of a religion which has greatly influenced the other faiths of the world.

DAWN IN ANCIENT PERSIA

The Story of the Zoroastrians

“**T**HUS spake Zarathustra.”

Even to-day the words have a strange power, an uncanny authority, though the Iranian Zarathustra—Zoroaster, as the Greeks pronounced his name—is a figure so legendary that we know scarcely anything of his life, and the noble religion which he founded can only claim about 125,000 adherents. The Parsees of India, and an odd 10,000 followers in Persia still live by the truth of the *Zend-Avesta*, the sacred scripture of the Zoroastrians. Numerically, therefore, it is insignificant against the hundreds of millions of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Muhammadans, and believers of the other great religious systems. Nevertheless it stands alongside Judaism : the first two religions which moved the world to true righteousness, the twin streams which poured their inspiration into the deep river of Christianity.

Hundreds of centuries before Christ, Zoroaster had his vision of the One God and of the right way of living. Out of his own deep inner consciousness he preached the need of every man to choose good and eschew evil, because God is good and we must needs be on His side. By the chances of history that message became the religion of the most powerful empire in the Western world ; made its contact with the Jews in exile by the waters of Babylon ; and when five hundred years later, Jesus, taught in Galilee and Jerusalem, that vision, shining through the Jewish faith, was the background of much of His teaching.

We know little enough of Zoroaster himself. Even the period of his life is given by different authorities at times centuries apart. Some say that he lived as far back as 1000 B.C. ; others, 800 B.C. ; the traditional date accepted by the Zoroastrians themselves is 660–583 B.C. ; but there is evidence for an even later time, some scholars holding that he was born 630 B.C. and lived until the middle of the next century when Cyrus the Great was beginning the creation of the

Persian Empire. Most evidence points to a period at the end of the seventh and beginning of the sixth century B.C., the time of the rise of Persian power.

His homeland was what is now Russian Turkestan, that vast plain north of Afghanistan and east of Persia. There the Iranian people were settled cattle farmers living a simple agricultural life in small village communities. Away to the west the city states of the Mesopotamian river valleys struggled for power; to the east China, old in the arts of civilisation, was passing through a time of internal dissension before the coming of Confucius. These troublous times found their echoes on the Iranian plains in the raids of wild, nomadic tribesmen, who would sweep down on the peaceful villages, kill and burn and loot, and then drive on, leaving the little communities to rebuild their tiny homesteads from the ruins.

Religion was a confused polytheistic nature worship, the vague outcome of man's wonder and fear in face of the awful unaccountable forces he saw and felt around him. Fire and water and the fruitful earth; the destroying lightning and the voice of thunder; the majestic stars; most of all the sun, lord of light upon which everything depended: each of these had their deities to these early Iranian people as they did to most primitive folk. Around their worship and propitiation the Magi, the priestly wise men, wove an elaborate ritual of sacrifice and ceremony. They it was who studied the heavens for signs and symbols, and who made their predictions from the auguries of earth. They it was who, clad in ceremonial robes, dominated the awe-stricken simple people and thus ruled the villages.

Into this world the child Zoroaster was born. The legends which later gathered about him claim that he was born of a virgin, a child of divine origin whose Father was *Ahura Mazda*, the lord of heaven. There were miraculous signs in the heavens at his birth, and as he grew into boyhood he amazed the Magi, confounding them by his questions and knowledge of priestly and spiritual things. Then at the age of fifteen he went apart to meditate, and for fifteen more years remained in seclusion, contemplating spiritual mysteries, before he began his preaching. Again the legends tell that he was caught up to heaven during those years, and received direct from *Ahura Mazda* the sacred words which were the basis of his doctrines and of the *Gathas*, the sacred poems which he wrote.

Dawn in Ancient Persia

So the teaching of Zoroaster began when he was a man of thirty, and for forty-seven years he gave his message to his people. It was a revolutionary message, daring, challenging. It swept aside the old polytheism and preached the One God, Creator of all that is good, true and beautiful, healthy, pleasant and constructive. Over against this goodness stood the force of evil, linked with all destruction, disorder, cruelty. The first principle of Zoroaster's teaching was this doctrine of opposed good and evil in the world, and their continual struggle for domination. But the good was ultimately to triumph, and Zoroaster's faith was robust, optimistic and loving this life of conflict for the good.

More important even than this abstract idea was the assertion that every individual man and woman was responsible for the part he or she took in the struggle. That was a marvellous new thought in the world. Each person has free will and must choose between *Ahura Mazda*, the Good and Wise, and *Angra Mainyu*, the Evil One. The Good God had six great qualities associated with Him : Good Intention, Righteousness, Power, Humility, Health, Discipline. As a concession to the old polytheism they were presented as persons associated with *Ahura Mazda*, and with the passage of years became increasingly personified ; but as Zoroaster himself taught to those who were wise enough to understand, these *Amesha-Spentas* were qualities which everybody who enlisted on the side of good had at his command to fight the forces of evil. Guarding against polytheism, Zoroaster specifically limited these beings to six, and to him they were simply helps in living the good life.

This linking up of worship with the living of a good life was the most remarkable of the teachings of Zoroaster. To-day we take it for granted as being of the very essence of religion, but in his day it was a revolutionary idea. Its introduction sets his standard alongside that of the early Hebrew lawgiver, Moses. It is the test of all true religion, and judged by it Zoroastrianism stands high indeed. For he carefully defined what this life consecrated to good must be. A man must live actively, cleanly, industriously ; must cultivate the land ; keep his body in perfect health by observing the laws of hygiene ; must speak the truth, be scrupulously honest, keep his promises, be generous to the poor, kind to domestic animals and help all good people who are in distress. Equally he must fight evil :

Angra Mainyu had inspired men and wild animals with his evil nature, and these must be relentlessly fought and overcome. The nomadic raiders, the leopard that springs upon the harmless and useful cattle, the sluggard, the unclean, the adherent of other religions : these were on the side of evil, their function to disturb the peace and good of the world. There must be no mercy towards them. Zoroastrianism had this one fundamental doctrine : fight for good, fight against evil. Ultimately *Ahura Mazda* would triumph, and it behoved every man to help hasten that day.

We have no authentic record of how these strange teachings were received. It is said that ten years passed before Zoroaster made a single convert ; but the truth had to be served, and he never turned aside. At last success came when he won over the King Hystaspes ; and the new religion survived, although shortly after this event the fast-conquering might of Persia overran this Iranian country. Indeed, as we look at the broad pattern of history, it seems as if this conquest were destined to serve the cause of religion. No longer was the wonderful revelation provincial and remote. It became the national religion of the Persians during the height of their power ; and, as we have seen, it contacted Judaism when the Jews also were swamped by Persian arms, and so made its tribute to Christianity.

Meantime it had its own great day. For twelve hundred years, from about 550 B.C. until the seventh century A.D., Zoroastrianism was the faith of this great and cultured Persian people. At the beginning of that time they were everywhere victorious under Cyrus the Great, who conquered the Medes in 553, then the Lydians, then the Babylonians, and so founded the vast empire under the Achæmenids. By the beginning of the fifth century, under Darius and Xerxes, they dominated the middle-eastern world, until their famous defeat by the Greeks at Salamis. Still for another century and a half, until Alexander the Great overthrew it, this Persian power held sway from the borders of India to the Mediterranean.

The religion of Zoroaster swept forward on the crest of the first wave of Persian conquest, as it could not have done had it remained a local belief of the Eastern plains. Inevitably it became corrupted. The old polytheism crept back ; the priesthood reverted to much of its magic ; the call of the good life was overshadowed by the luxury and license of a world-state of immense riches. Nevertheless this

faith kept a light burning, and when the bad times came with the Alexandrine conquest and in the years of internecine strife after his death, it was to Zoroastrianism that the people turned again. The call from the priesthood was for a more rigid formalism, a more elaborate ceremonial, an observance of the outward forms. There was one splendid revival of the faith in the third century A.D. when King Artabanus, founder of the noble Sassanian dynasty, allied himself with the Magi and initiated a renaissance of Zoroastrianism which remained the official religion of Persia until the Muhammadans swept down upon the country in the seventh century and ruthlessly stamped it out. A few of the faithful established themselves at settlements in Southern Persia, a number more fled to the western coast of India. In these two districts we find them to-day ; and it is a tribute to the faith that the Parsees of India (the word means Persian) are probably the most upright, cultured and ethical people in the vast welter of Indian religions.

The sacred book of the Zoroastrians is called *Avesta*, or more properly *Zend-Avesta*, for it includes a commentary, the *Zend*, which was added during the revival we have noted under King Artabanus. At that time it was translated into the Pahlavi language, and at that time also was created the Zoroastrian encyclopædia, *Bundahishn*, which attempted to bring all the phenomena of the world into the orbit of their religious system. The *Zend-Avesta* contains some sections of *Gathas*, the poems traditionally written by Zoroaster himself, as well as the ancient prayers written by the first disciples of the great teacher. These fundamental words of the religion are written in a dialect which belongs to the sixth and seventh century B.C., but the later parts of the book belong to any period between this and the third century of our era.

Amid much that is confusing and legendary in these writings the worship of fire as the symbol of purification and of *Ahura Mazda* stands out. There are strange doctrines of immortality, for each man possesses a guardian spirit (*fravashi*) which is the counterpart of himself. Also he has his soul which hovers above the physical body for three days after death during the funeral rites—those dramatic rites at the Towers of Silence to which finally the body is consigned, where the vultures cleanse the bones. There is a curious conception of a Judgment at the bridge between earth and heaven, where the good

and bad deeds of this life are balanced, and if the good predominates, the bridge to the realm of everlasting light is wide and easy ; if not, it becomes but a hair's breadth and the wicked fall down to the abyss. Before crossing the bridge into *Ahura Mazda's* kingdom of "everlasting light" penance has to be done even by the good souls for deeds of wickedness.

As we would expect of any writing of such a period there are many wonders and miracles. A deal of strange occultism connects each of the six *Amesha-Spentas*, the archangels around *Ahura Mazda*, with one of the six elements of the world : fire, water, earth, metals, animals and plants. Wildly fantastic legends surround the life of Zoroaster himself, such as that of his converting Hystaspes finally by bargaining to heal a favourite horse, curing it leg by leg, and so winning the King's favour. Also there are strange prophecies of the end of the world : the three-thousand-year strife between good and evil which must precede it, the dragon ultimately to be loosed, and the terrible final days until *Mazda* sends one, Sraoshvant, to destroy the dragon and inaugurate the reign of light.

Fascinating to the folklorist as such legends must be, we turn to Zoroastrianism not for these. Rather is it that here, as we have seen, was one of the first religions which demanded goodness of the personal life as the only acceptable worship of a God of all the earth whose nature was goodness. Driven to define goodness in terms of daily living, it created a code of cleanliness, honesty, industry, truthfulness, generosity and social integrity. All this powerful ethical doctrine poured its virtue by the chance of history into Judaism, Christianity and Muhammadanism, and so made this religion of Zoroaster one of power long after its own original force had shrunken.

To-day it remains a beautiful survival, but still its adherents command the deep respect of their neighbours because of the fineness of their lives.

"Wherever you find culture in India you find the Parsees. They are almost the only patrons of art. They are the only people who have apportioned anything like an adequate part of their wealth to the social services, founding hospitals and libraries, establishing parks and playing grounds. India without the Parsees would be like an egg without salt."

So says a recent writer on India. It is a worthy tribute to these people

who have become the industrialists, bankers and shipowners of India without the taint of exploitation of their fellowmen.

So it is not only those romantic Towers of Silence where the consuming fire and the birds of the air cleanse the dead body and save earth and man from pollution ; not only the literary grandeur of the *Zend-Avesta* ; not only the fascinating past ; but the truth and beauty of a religion which still has its influence flowing through the world in its own small sphere and more widely under other forms ; its One God worshipped still under His name *Ahura Mazda* in His own temples, and under other names by other worshippers who know His virtue.



The Wisdom of Zoroastrianism

“ Thou, *Ahura Mazda*, in the beginning didst create beings and men by thy thought, and intelligences—when thou didst make life clothed with body, when thou madest actions and teachings, whereby one may exercise choice at one’s own free will.”



“ Any one in the world here below can attain purity for himself when he cleanses himself with good thoughts, words and deeds.”



“ The religion of the sacred beings is truth and its law is virtue, and it is desirous of welfare and compassion as regards the creatures.”



“ As to the soul liberality is good, as to all the world truth ; unto the sacred Being, gratitude ; as to a man’s self, wisdom.”



“ That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.”



“ These four habits are the principles of the religion of Zarathustra : to exercise liberality in connection with the worthy ; to do justice ; to be friendly unto every one ; to be sincere and true and to keep falsehood far from themselves.”



“ One truthful man is better than the whole world speaking falsehood.”

C R E D O

THE BELIEFS OF THE JEWS

THERE is one God, Jehovah, Maker of heaven and earth. He alone shall be worshipped, and He has revealed Himself and His laws particularly to His chosen people, the Jews. Thus He promised Abraham, the father of the race; thus He promised Jacob the Patriarch, and Moses the Lawgiver who led them from slavery in Egypt to the land of Canaan.

From the sacred mountain of Sinai Jehovah's law was revealed in ten especial commandments, and in later years expanded into the Books of the Law. Because they did not obey Jehovah's laws the Jews were scattered, suffered defeat and exile, ultimately endured complete loss of their promised land. Only the Books of the Law remained to bind them together in an intense national religion, and the Messianic hope that one day God would send One who should lead His people back. Study the Law, therefore; lead the good life of righteousness laid down by the ancient prophets and expounded by the rabbis; observe strictly the ritual of Judaism. So shall God's people return to power and rule again in His name.

THE LAW FROM SINAI

The Story of Judaism

THE Chosen People. Is there, can there be, anything in that most arrogant of all claims ? Was Israel really singled out by God ? Was the Divine purpose made plain to this handful of Semites amid the teeming millions of the earth ? This, at least, we can say : that no people have had such a genius for religion, and no such progressive revelation of moral and spiritual law exists in the history of mankind. Everything in their national life and tradition is directed towards their faith. In their legendary beginnings they forbade art lest it should lead them astray from God ; they made no contribution in ancient days to science ; their literature—one of the noblest and best preserved of all ancient literatures—was consecrated ; their political life revolved round their relationship with God, and when they were utterly broken and defeated as a nation their whole corporate life was the testimony of their invincible faith. Theirs is the most perfect, the most carefully documented case history of the search for God. As Athanasius said :

“The Jews are the sacred school of the knowledge of God and of the spiritual life of mankind.”

Moreover, their religion prepared the way for Christianity and Muhammadanism, the two most dynamic faiths of the world. It had in it the basic belief in the One God, who demanded of His worshippers not elaborate ritual but ethical goodness.

“What does the Lord require of thee but to do justice and love mercy ?”

cries the prophet Micah.

“Loving-kindness is greater than law ; and the charities of life are more than all ceremony,”

says the Talmud.

It is this concentration of belief in the One God and its reflection in the good life which gives Judaism its astounding importance among early faiths.

Throughout the whole magnificent body of the *Torah*, which is the keystone of the faith, into the elaborate detail of the *Talmud*, which is its exposition, everywhere in the Hebrew sacred writings we find this one thing : the insistence on the Oneness of God, and the unity of man with Him through participation in His nature of goodness and justice. Judaism is not a speculation upon the universe, but a practical guidance to the good life. History, biography, folklore, poetry, philosophy, all point the same path : One God whose way is righteousness.

The progressive revelation of this idea comes through the most amazing series of God-filled lives and writings. From the shadowy figures of the Bronze Age patriarchs, the scarcely more definite personality of Moses, to the first judges and hero-kings, on to the prophets, the line never falters. Every event in their history is definitely related to it. And when, at the appointed time, as it seems to many of us, it found in the sublime revelation of Jesus of Nazareth its ultimate fulfilment, Judaism turned back on itself in fear that its fundamental principle of monotheism was being violated. Thus it rejected Jesus for that most noble reason. But its own creative development had already ended.

"When Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi died the Holy Spirit departed from Israel," declares the *Talmud*; and the prophetic books, the books of wisdom and the sacred stories written after that date were gathered into the *Apocrypha* and deemed secondary to the Bible. More important still, the line of the great Prophets whose task was the unflinching declaration of God's will and purpose gave place to that of the Rabbis whose business was to expound the original writings and to crystallise the ethics into set rules of conduct. No longer was it *Torah*, the Law, which was being created, but *Talmud*, the exposition. The one word means direction, instruction ; the other, study. When Jesus came, the original impetus had already gone from Judaism.

We know more of the story of the Jews than of any other people, through our study of the Hebrew Bible as the background to Christianity. The inevitable bias of this knowledge, however, has tended to

obscure its true relationship with history in general, and even with religion. Indeed, until a few decades since, when the so-called "higher criticism" came into being, our study of the Bible as the sacrosanct Word of God was hopelessly misleading. Since then a dozen sciences have brought their light to bear. The archaeologists have excavated in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, Greece; anthropologists have discovered the ways of primitive man; philologists have studied the literal word, folklorists the story bases; evolutionists, geologists, biologists and historians have discredited the arbitrary chronology but found in the Hebrew legends and lore a symbolic record of creation and the upward struggle of the race which broadly accords with their other knowledge. Most important of all, students of the evolution of morals and of the human conception of God have found a perfect record made by a people whose whole mentality concentrated upon these things. The Bible as a basis for superstition has been supplanted by the Bible as the basis for scholarship and inspiration; and humanity is the gainer.

The picture which emerges, and against which the Jewish religion has to be considered, is of a Bronze Age Semitic people migrating from the comparative civilisation of the Euphrates valley to the Mediterranean coast; migrating again southward into Egypt where they were at first well received then subjected to virtual slavery, until a leader, Moses, led them in revolt and flight. There follows a period of nomad life in the desert, the reconquest of the Canaanite land to which Abraham had first led them, the establishment of a kingship and the growth of a small but wealthy nation, which soon breaks into a northern and a southern kingdom; the conquest and dispersal of the larger northern kingdom by the Assyrians and later that of the southern kingdom by the Babylonians. With the triumph of Persia over Babylon, in 539 B.C., a remnant of these people of Judah were permitted to return to their capital, Jerusalem, rebuild their sanctuary there, and re-establish their religion. Under the Greece of Alexander the Great, in the third century B.C. and through the troubled years that followed, the Jews were sometimes forcibly, sometimes willingly, transported to Alexandria and the other Hellenistic settlements of North Africa, while many of them had permanently settled in Babylon. There was a violent persecution of them in Palestine in the second century B.C. which caused the courageous and

approximately successful revolt under Judas Maccabeus, and then a long period of fluctuating fortune and tolerance under Roman rule. But the Jews would have no part in the mutual toleration of Roman polytheism. Their doctrine of the One God brought them eventually, as it brought the Christians, into conflict with Rome, and in A.D. 70 Jerusalem and the Temple were finally destroyed, the Jews were forbidden to live in the vicinity, and their utter dispersal followed.

The Jewish nation as a political entity was ended, but the Jewish people were deliberately rallied by their leaders round their sacred writings. In Babylon and Alexandria and Rome itself, they became a separate nation within the nations. The *Torah* was their flag, their homeland, their kingdom. They were sometimes tolerated, at others persecuted ; but, whatever their treatment, the concentration on their own religion and culture and a strict observance of their own rules of life and laws of worship continued. Great Rabbis carried on the task and were the accepted heads and rulers of the dispersed people.

Under the Muhammadan rise to power in the seventh century this monotheistic religion of the Jews was nearer acceptance than many other faiths, and found more toleration by the fanatical followers of the Prophet ; and when that power was at its height in Europe and Asia Minor and Northern Africa, the Jewish scholars worked amiably with those of Islam. The crusades threw back the Moslems from Europe, and a fresh outbreak of persecution followed for the Jews, who were regarded as their associates. There were economic reasons also for Jewish unpopularity, for, since the Jews were not under the edict against usury of the Catholic Church and were, moreover, forbidden almost everywhere to own land or to participate in the crafts, they became the money-lenders of the mediæval communities. Highly moral reasons were easily discovered for exterminating or driving abroad people to whom vast sums were owing.

The more they suffered under the peoples in whose countries they dwelt, the more fiercely did they draw together in the bonds of their religion. The Jew and the suffering man of God became synonymous. So until the French Revolution raised its liberating cry, "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity," and with Gallic logic applied this also to the Jews, they became everywhere the persecuted people. Their more recent history is one of growing toleration marred by ugly outbreaks of anti-Semitism, with wholesale murders and spoilation

in Czarist Russia, Poland and the Balkans, and even more recently in Germany and elsewhere under Nazism. With the end of the first World War in 1918 a promise by the victorious powers to give them back political power in their ancient country of Palestine has met with fierce opposition by the Arabs who for centuries had lived there under Turkish domination and were also promised the land. Elsewhere the growth of toleration has tended, paradoxically enough, to work against the faithfulness of the Jew to his religion. More and more they mix their racial stream with those of the peoples among whom they live. Their faith loses adherents. The religion of the Hebrews seems to have served its wonderful purpose : the keeping alive of the idea of the One God, and of unity with Him through the good life.

That religion can only be justly estimated against the background of this five thousand years of history. The Jews themselves hold that the meaning of history is the unfolding of the Divine purpose, and wrote their own records to show this. Their recurring political death meant their spiritual rebirth. They found God not amid the flesh-pots of Egypt but in the desert under Sinai ; they betrayed Him in the great days of their wealth and prosperity so that the Prophets railed against them in His name, but by the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept remembering Zion and the God of Zion ; and when Titus destroyed the Temple their religion became domestic and deeply personal and "The Word became Book." More than that it became an indestructible thing in their hearts, undying while a single Jew remained alive.

There is a fascination in tracing how the fundamental idea of the nature of God evolved through all this. At the beginning we find a typical tribal deity, Jahweh, emerging as the One God of this people as they themselves emerge from the normal polytheism of the Semitic folk of the Bronze Age nearly two thousand years B.C. The promise to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses ; the delivery from Egypt ; the upholding of the Israelites in battles against the neighbouring tribes and their gods ; the establishment of the kingdom in Canaan ; the home of the god in the Ark of the Covenant and later in the Temple : everything is the usual manifestation of a powerful tribal god. But already there are indications that His power extends beyond the tribe and the soil of their region—a new thing this in early religion. And

very early, indeed, we get the note struck that loyalty to Him depends not so much upon the observance of ritual and the avoidance of taboos, but upon just relationships between man and man. There is little magic or metaphysics. The Books of the Law associated with God become the touchstone of the religion, and when they come to be written down hundreds of years afterwards there is a consistent tradition of justice and right dealing.

Those Books became the *Torah*, and that is the keyword of the Jewish religion. In its most rigid sense it refers to the Five Books traditionally given by God to Moses on Sinai, that revelation of Divine direction as the wandering tribes crystallised into a nation after the flight from Egypt. In its wider sense *Torah* is the whole instruction of ethical conduct and worship, the duty of living in the Jewish way and of passing on the instruction to later generations.

“ This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.”

That was God’s word to Joshua, the successor to Moses. Then, as *The Ethics of the Fathers*, one of the important writings of the faith, says :

“ Moses received the *Torah* on Sinai, and handed it down to Joshua ; Joshua to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue.”

So the unbroken tradition of *Torah*, the Law, comes down through the ages.

Noble personalities arise in Israel, the Prophets, who add to the original instruction. Often they are completely unpopular in their advocacy of truth to *Torah*, and to a growing concept of God which runs counter to the easy-going ways of their fellow-countrymen. Often they are reluctant to undertake the task which God imposes upon them. Amos and Hosea preached righteousness and warned the people of social iniquity and the consequences of their departure from the ways of God long before retribution overtook them ; Jeremiah, more than a century later, after the prophecies of disaster to the northern kingdom had been fulfilled by the Assyrian conquest, uttered the same words of warning to Judah, living to see their

conquest by Babylon, and then writing to the exiles exhorting them to be true to the worship of the One God even though they are separated from His sanctuary. Then came the Prophets of the time after the Exile. With that period of adversity the teaching deepened. Many new ideas had been gathered by contact with the religions of the East, especially with Zoroastrianism. Chief of these, the conception of an after-life which would compensate for the ills suffered by the righteous in this, became part of the Hebrew faith, though the powerful party of the Sadducees never accepted it. Worldly reward for the righteous life had long been the Hebrew doctrine, part of the promise ; and, as the magnificent drama of Job reveals, had become suspect under the blows of circumstance. The bitter experience of the Exile had strengthened the case against it, and contact with the doctrines of Zoroaster suggested an answer to the difficulty. The duality of that religion, the doctrine of angels, many new ideas, crept in from those Eastern contacts, and also from the experience of suffering. Isaiah, Hosea, Malachi, Amos : the later writers move onward from the early conception of God as Sovereignty, Holiness and Law to one of love, mercy and the forgiveness of the penitent. Moreover, they have evolved from a narrow nationalism to the belief that their God is the Lord of all the Earth and that one day His Kingdom will be established. Sometimes that Kingdom is merely a hope of Jewish political domination ; at its best it is a vision of the spiritual unity of mankind. The Jewish writings show in wonderful fashion this changing conception of the nature of God and the meaning of His righteousness.

It was in the fifth century B.C., with the return to Jerusalem from exile of Ezra the Scribe and his company, that the literature of the religion first crystallised. He created the First Synagogue, that synod of learned men who shaped the earliest canon of the Hebrew scriptures. But it was not until the second century A.D. that the Hebrew Bible—the books of the Old Testament as we have them—was finally agreed ; and then it included not only the Books of the Law, the Pentateuch which had been discovered in 622 B.C., just before the Exile, and the first history as recorded in Kings, but the revision of that history in Chronicles, the retelling of some of the original legends (such as that account of creation which opens the Bible), the later folk stories which were considered to reveal the ways of God to man,

the magnificent psalms and wisdom books, and, most important of all, the highly spiritual prophetic writings. Other works of a like nature, but deemed to be of secondary importance, were gathered into the Apocrypha.

It is owing to this organised definition of their literature and its study that we owe the existence of the Jews to-day, for this concentration of the national spirit and laws enabled them centuries later to resist all attempts to destroy them as a people. Even when Antiochus IV, in the second century B.C., defiled the Temple and burnt the Books of the Law, those books were too well known by the Jews and proved indestructible, so that after the revolt of Judas Maccabeus they were re-established. Toleration followed ; then the threat to their very existence, the last Roman persecution under Titus in A.D. 70. It was here that the whole structure of their national life underwent its ultimate change. The Temple and the State were irremediably lost. The leader-priests and homeland vanished. Then it was that the Rabbis deliberately rallied the nation around the *Torah*, and faced the task of applying it under the difficult conditions of the dispersal of the Jews.

From A.D. 70 until about the year A.D. 200 the task continued. Meantime, as we have seen, the sacrosanct scriptural canon was finally decided. The discussions of the Rabbis during those years were gathered into the writings called *Mishnah*, and those which followed into a third scripture called *Gemara*. These two form the *Talmud*, the study of the Law. They were evolved chiefly by the Jews in Babylon and those at a school at Tiberius in Palestine, and were complete by the end of the fifth century.

Thus through persecution and suffering came this great religion of the sacred books. Inevitably there was careful direction for the most minute observance of details of the Law, often merely ritualistic, for such observance would be the test of adherence to the faith and the nation in whatever part of the world the devout Hebrew dwelt. The whole structure marvellously created a nation inside all other nations, with a rigidly defined boundary of its own habits and customs, religion and laws.

This adherence to the exact letter of the Law as defined by the Scribes and Pharisees—a matter upon which Jesus of Nazareth had spoken centuries before, while yet the Jews were centred in Palestine

—became at once the strength and the weakness of the faith. The minute study of the sacred books by all the scholars of Jewry had its disadvantages, for textual quibbles took the place of the noble ethical monotheism of the original scriptures. The Rabbis may be the heirs of the Prophets, and Phariseeism may be applied prophecy, but their dynamic power in moving men to righteousness and making them aware of God is infinitely less.

Nevertheless great men came out of Jewry and the Jewish faith, worthy followers of the scholars and saints of earlier time. Such were Rabbi Hillel who lived just before Jesus, Philo the Platonist Jew who lived at Alexandria at the beginning of the Christian era and allied Hebrew wisdom to that of the Greeks, or Akiba ben Joseph of the end of the first century A.D. In the magnificent days of the Jewish-Islamic co-operation in mediæval Spain two outstanding Rabbis added much to the literature of the Jews. One was Salomon ben Gabirol (1020–1070), some of whose poems form part of the Jewish liturgy, and the other Maimonides (1135–1204) of Cordova, writer of *Yad Hazakah*, “The Strong Hand,” a synthesis and digest of Jewish law.

As we look back over the thousands of years of this Jewish life and writing, we realise anew that here if anywhere in the story of the human race is to be found the record that will “justify the ways of God to Man.” Here is the great revelation of that God of whom they say :

“ All His ways are justice, a God of faithfulness and without iniquity.”

Here is the basis of ethical monotheism.

“ It is the idea and challenge of the One. The One thing commanded, the Good and the Right, the One Being who proclaimed this and demanded it from men. Finally it means the Unity and Totality of Man.”

That God, sole, incorporeal and supremely holy, created the world for mankind and created mankind to walk His ways therein. As their conception of His nature widened with the centuries, so their understanding of their duties and right relationships with their fellow-beings widened. The Hebrew religion is germinal. It began by being

tribal, it ends by being universal ; it began with a national deity of wrath and vengeance, it rises in such Prophets as Isaiah or Amos to a God of universal nature, just ruler of all people ; it began with inexorable law, it culminates in forgiving love. And if in these later days it loses some of its dynamic power, that is only because its fundamental ethics have become the basis of the life of civilisation, and the God whom the Hebrews painfully grew to understand has become indeed the Judge of all the Earth.



The Wisdom of the Hebrews

“ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Genesis.



“ Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it : except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

Psalm cxxvii.



“ The Ten Words of the Law :

I am the Lord thy God.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Honour thy father and thy mother.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Thou shalt not covet.

Exodus.



Hear, O Israel : the Lord our God is One God ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

Deuteronomy.



“ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself : I am the Lord.”

Leviticus.

“ Because I delivered the poor that cried,
The fatherless also, that had none to help him.
The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me,
And I caused the widow’s heart to sing with joy.
I put on righteousness and it clothed me :
My justice was as a robe and a diadem.
I was eyes to the blind,
And feet was I to the lame.
I was a father to the needy :
And the cause of him that I knew not I searched out.”

Job.

“ To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.”

Proverbs.

“ Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge.”

Leviticus.

“ Charity is more than sacrifices.”

Talmud.

“ He that loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law.”

Talmud.

“ They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks ; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Isaiah.

“ What is hateful to thee, do not unto thy fellow-man ; this is the whole Law ; the rest is mere commentary.”

Rabbi Hillel.

“ Thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing that Thou hast made : for never wouldest Thou have made any thing if Thou hadst hated it. And how could any thing have endured, if it had not been Thy will ? or been preserved, if not called by Thee ? But Thou sparest all, for they are Thine, O Lord, Thou lover of souls.”

The Wisdom of Solomon.

CREDO

THE BELIEFS OF TAOISM

OUT of the ancient past of China, the sage Lao-Tze evolved his doctrine of acceptance of the fundamental laws of nature. How shall Man live? Lao-Tze answered: by yielding, by giving himself up to the principles which control the natural world of which he forms a part. From immemorial times the Chinese had recognised the compensatory principles of positive and negative, of male and female, of heaven and earth, of spirit and matter, weaving and interweaving to make the pattern of the universe. Let a man, then, study these, that he might discover the Tao, the Way.

In a short but precious scripture, the *Tao-te-Ching*, by a series of vexing paradox, the old sage laid down this profound nature religion and the maxims of morality which arose from it. "Let alone": that was the keynote. We may regret that, under the monastic system to which Taoism gave rise the faith degenerated into too spiritless an acceptance of things as they were, but against this must be seen the sublimity of Chinese art and poetry in China's greatest period, for Taoism goes straight to Nature for its inspiration and there discovers the meaning of life.

LAO-TZE REVEALS THE PATH

The Story of Taoism

THE earliest civilisations always began in the great river valleys. The Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Ganges : to the plains alongside these nomadic Man came, discovered the marvel of the recurring seasons and the growth of seed with its untold possibilities of supplying food for himself and his herds, and carried humanity one further step in its development by turning to agriculture. This whole story of civilisation is a story of man's gradual conquest of the world in which he found himself. First came his discovery of fire ; then his making of tools and weapons to help in the shaping of inanimate objects and the killing of the animals which he hunted ; then the domestication of dogs, reindeer, horses, cows and sheep to provide power, food, milk and clothing ; then, at the beginning of the New Stone Age—roughly 5000 B.C.—this change from the wandering life in search of growing food to the settled life wherein the food was caused to grow. To this end the fertile land beside the great rivers lent itself ; and in Egypt, in Mesopotamia and in India the cultural ancestors of European man established their first permanent homes.

Meantime, in the Far East, this same pattern of life repeated itself. The nomads of Central Asia pressing southward and eastward from those inhospitable regions came down through the terrifying gorges which two vast rivers had torn through the mountains and eventually found themselves in the promising fertility of the country bordering the Yellow River, *Hwang Ho*, and the *Yangtze Kiang*. There they settled, and the civilisation of China was born more than five thousand years ago.

Of that civilisation we have the longest unbroken records ; and, indeed, Chinese civilisation itself has an unbroken record far longer than any other, for while those of Mesopotamia, of Egypt, Crete, Greece, Persia, Rome have passed away, and that of Europe has

established itself, this Eastern people have persisted. Dynasties have gone on for hundreds of years and given place to others ; civil wars and invasions have swept over the country ; floods and famines have killed the people in millions ; but Chinese civilisation persists. *Plus ça change, plus ça la même chose* : the more it changes the more it is the same thing.

One-fifth of the whole population of the earth dwell within the far-flung borders of China. The languages of different provinces are so dissimilar that although they are written with the same symbols and so can be read by any literate Chinaman, the speech of a Chinese from one part cannot be understood by one from another part. Nevertheless China is one nation with characteristics entirely her own, with a magnificent art (perhaps the finest in the whole world), a splendid literature which was already old when the earliest Anglo-Saxon poems were being sung by wandering minstrels, a noble record in science and invention—both paper and printing were Chinese discoveries ; silk was her secret for many centuries, until some silkworms were smuggled out of the country ; and gunpowder her amusement in fireworks long before European man made it his barbarous means of destruction.

What of her religion ? Naturally, through the millenia between the Bronze Age, 2,000 B.C., and to-day it has evolved from within and been influenced from without. Buddhism, when it had practically failed in India, found in China its home ; Christianity has made its impact ; and as Sun Yat Sen, the founder of modern China, was Christian, and Chiang Kai Shek his son-in-law as well as Madame Chiang Kai Shek are Christian, it is likely to have a great place in the future. But the religions inherently Chinese are Confucianism and Taoism, the doctrines of two great teachers, K'ung-fu-tzu and Lao-Tze, who lived in the sixth century B.C. Both of them, however, derive from an earlier religion of China which goes back into the darkness of prehistoric times and still manifests itself in nature worship and ancestor worship in China to-day.

This primitive faith yields one of the most fascinating conceptions of the universe. It declares that there are behind all things two complementary principles, *Yang* and *Yin*. *Yang* is positive, male, the principle of heaven, of the father, of gold, of the head ; *Yin* is negative, female, the principle of the mother, of earth. *Yang* controls

water and air ; *Yin* controls mountains. So the whole earth and the elements are composed of the everlasting interweaving and influence of *Yang* and *Yin*. Subtly, too, *Yang* has in it a touch of the nature of *Yin*, and vice versa.

All this worked out in primitive times in a vast system of worship of animals and spirits of nature and the propitiation of evil spirits which is not remarkably different from the early beliefs of people everywhere ; but as Chinese thought evolved it proved to be a conception which could bear continual fresh expansion. Most of all it gave an instinct of trust in nature as the background of man's experience, a calm acceptance of the workings of "whatever gods may be," and a feeling for the happy balance and the avoidance of extremes. These attitudes persist in the Chinese. They are characteristic, and explain much in the mentality of this great people.

The early worship of many spirits grouped around these two principles of heaven and earth, the male and female ancestors and the animals. It formalised into a rigid system of family and state ceremonial. It established a hierarchy extending downwards, in the state from the Emperor who was regarded as a direct Son of Heaven, in the family from the eldest member throughout the generations. Ideally the urge was a balance between the spiritual and the physical, between heaven and earth, between male and female, between *Yang* and *Yin*. Certain substances such as jade, which was a water-formed rock, became in themselves sacred ; certain forms also. Thus the *pi*, a flat circle usually of jade and carved with significant devices, was at once the symbol of heaven and of the Emperor, and all great officials carried it as token of their power under him. Chinese art began with the creation first of writing which embodied the *Yang* and *Yin* symbols, and afterwards spread to a sign for every existing thing ; and secondly with a number of these semi-sacred forms cast in bronze or carved in stone. At first, and throughout vast stretches of time, an approximately ordered Feudal society persisted under the great Chou dynasty, (1122-206 B.C.). But the weakness of Feudalism was always the chance of weak overlords, and that of ambitious men ready to use their armies to seize the supreme power or to wrestle for it among themselves. So it happened in ancient China, and by the end of the seventh century B.C. the disintegration shows us a picture of five warring states rather than of one central one.

Into this world of internecine strife, decaying religion, and the loss of the old standards of morality, social order and security, two great men were born—Lao-Tze and K'ung-fu-tzu whom we call Confucius. It was indeed an age of great spiritual beings, for Gautama the Buddha was born in India, Isaiah in Judea, and at its end Socrates and Plato in Greece. The two Chinese sages gave their answers to the implied question which Plato afterwards so definitely formulated : How can a man live a good life and what condition of society best encourages it ? They gave totally different replies, because Lao-Tze, the Old Philosopher, concerned himself with the problem of the innate goodness of the individual, and Confucius with framing rules for a social order which would stabilise conduct and so ensure the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Six hundred years later, in the first century A.D., Buddhism was to come to China with its own answers, but these other two were intrinsically Chinese, having their roots in that ancient native system.

Recent scholarship, with its genius for disbelief, has suggested that there was no such person as Lao-Tze, just as it suggested that there was no Jesus of Nazareth, and no William Shakespeare. But the history of mankind remains a history of supreme personalities who incarnate the spiritual and mental urges of their periods and express them so satisfactorily that other men accept their ideas. Great teachers, great artists, great leaders come when the times are ripe, and institutions are their vast shadows. Little though we know, therefore, of the actual history and doings of Lao-Tze, we will accept the historical legend and his authorship of one of the great scriptures of the world, the *Tao-Te-Ching*.

Lao-Tze was born in 604 B.C. in the Province of Tchu and he lived until he was a very old man at the end of the following century. The far-fetched legends of his birth claimed that he remained for no less than eighty-one years in his mother's womb, and so was born white-haired and supremely wise. They also assert that his mother was a virgin. But upon such stories we may exercise our Western and modern doubts. Suffice it that we find him eventually established as the Keeper of the Archives and the Library of a prince of the Chou dynasty, and that ultimately he retired to live in the mountains of the Ling-Po to carry out his doctrine of quietude and passivity. A guard of the Kwan Yin Pass, knowing the reputation

for wisdom of the old man, begged him ere he rode on to write down the fundamental principles of his teaching, and so was born the five-thousand-word Canon of Reason and Virtue, the *Tao-Te-Ching*, containing the doctrine of the *Tao*, the Way, the Path. Thus delivering to the world the words of his enlightenment the old man seated on his ox travelled away into the Western sunset up the Pass of Hsien-Ku and was seen no more.

A mass of legendary stories ultimately gathered about him, chiefly of his answers in the paradoxical manner of the *Tao* to disciples or critics. Not the least interesting of these is the reputed visit of Confucius, a much younger man, for he was born in 551 B.C. Confucius is said to have urged his system of exact duties against the seemingly vagueness of the Old Philosopher, till Lao-Tze cried :

“The chaff from winnowing will blind a man so that he cannot see the points of the compass. Mosquitoes will keep him awake all night by their biting. In the same way this talk of charity and duty to one’s neighbour drives me nearly crazy. Sir, strive to keep the world in its original simplicity. And as the wind bloweth where it will, so let virtue establish itself. Wherefore this undue energy, as though searching for a fugitive with a big drum? The swan is white without a daily bath; the raven is black without daily colouring itself. The original simplicity of black and white are beyond the reach of argument. When a pond dries up and the fish are left upon dry ground, to moisten them with the breath or to damp them with a little spittle is not to be compared with leaving them as at first in their native lake.”

That rebuke contains the essence of *Tao* and *Taoism*. Leave alone; do things Nature’s way; do not strive, even for so-called goodness; get back not only to Nature but to the principle of the universe of which Nature itself is an expression. The *Tao* is thus the original thing, the first principle, the thing which governed God as well as man. It was to be found by absolute individual quiescence, non-striving. A whole new set of values of what is good and what is bad comes into the world once that principle is accepted. Ambition and self-seeking, those curses which were killing all that was good in his world—as they still do to-day—were to give place to self-effacement.

" That by which great rivers and seas receive the tribute of all streams is the fact of their being lowly ; that is the cause of their superiority."

That type of paradoxical epigram is typical of the *Tao-Te-Ching*, and indeed water became its most frequent image,

" The greatest virtue is like water ; it is good to all things. It attains the most inaccessible places without strife. Therefore it is like Tao.

It has the virtue of adapting itself to its place.
And because it does not strive it has no enemies."

" Nothing on earth is so weak and yielding as water, but for breaking down the strong it has no equal."

Thus it urged the line of least resistance in the individual and the corporate life. Of that passion for interfering and putting things right which excused the actions of the worst men and motivated the mistakes of the best, Lao-Tze had a horror.

" When a man wishes to reform the world and takes it in hand, I perceive there will be no end to it. Whoever makes, destroys ; whoever grasps, loses."

" The wise man is full of rectitude, but he does not chip and carve at others.

He is just, but he does not admonish others.

He is upright, but he does not straighten others.

He is enlightened, but he does not offend with his brightness."

More deeply he says :

" When the Tao is lost, men follow after duty and charity to one's neighbour.

When a nation is filled with strife then do patriots flourish."

" Virtue consists in being true to oneself, and charity in letting alone."

" Letting alone " : that was the keynote of the *Tao*. War and ambition, those interlinked curses of humanity, would cease if only men would grasp this doctrine, Lao-Tze urged. His book was therefore full of this wisdom of letting-go. Away in distant India the Buddha was yet to preach his doctrine of non-desire, and more than five centuries were to pass before it came to China, but Lao-Tze made it the very heart of his teaching. " Fasting of the heart," he

called it, and he advocated a life of primitive simplicity and non-possession.

"Give people blank to look at and simplicity to hold, they will have little selfishness and few desires."

The five colours blind the eye ; the five sounds deafen the ear ; the five tastes spoil the palate. Hunting and chasing make one's mind go mad."

It was not that he advocated retirement from the world, although in the contemplation of mists and mountains, clouds and streams lay true happiness, and the working of the universal spirit could best be realised in the acceptance of Nature. Wordsworth had the same spiritual message. When this spirit was made the basis of Chinese painting it produced the greatest landscape art that the world has ever known ; indeed, we cannot understand Chinese art without this background of Taoist philosophy. But for the average man the retirement of the hermit was seen to be impossible, and the Old Philosopher taught rather the doctrine of simple non-attachment to the things about him, a reduction of wants and desires. Indeed, though one lives in a palace and does not desire it, possession can do no harm, he declared. Many centuries later a greater than he, was to bid His disciples :

"Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Therefore, be not anxious for the morrow, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink and what ye shall put on."

To Lao-Tze, as to Jesus, this "fasting of the heart" was not withdrawal from the world, but simply living childlike in the moment and not permitting material to dominate spirit. One Taoist story illustrates how deeply this teaching went. It tells how the Emperor Yao, seeking a man worthy to occupy the throne after him, went to the Sage Tsao Fu in his poor hermitage in the mountains, and urged him to leave it for the glory of the palace and the power of the throne. When the Emperor had gone, the Sage washed his ears !

The other point where the teaching of the Chinese Sage reminds us strongly of that of Jesus of Nazareth is in its certainty that evil could be overcome by that exercise of active goodness which is the positive pacifism.

"I would return good for good," he says; "I would also return good for evil.

I would meet trust with trust; I would also meet suspicion with confidence."

"Even if a man is bad, how can it be right to cast him off? Requite injury with kindness."

"To the good I would be good; to the not-good I would also be good in order to make them good.

The good man is the bad man's teacher; the bad man is the material upon which the good man works. If the one does not value his teacher, if the other does not love his material, then despite their sagacity they must go astray. This is a mystery of great import."

So, half a thousand years before Jesus, Lao-Tze enunciated his deepest wisdom in dealing with the problem of evil in the world. Two thousand years more have passed and we have scarcely begun to learn it.

The religion of Lao-Tze shared the fate of many great religions. At first, neglect save in the hearts of a few faithful disciples. Then the coming of powerful advocates who could crystallize and to some extent popularise, could make known the letter but at what cost to the spirit! Then, after centuries, acceptance in high places; but by this time compromise has been reached with almost all that the original Founder came to preach against. Finally establishment, degeneracy, malpractices. The world triumphed in its own immemorial way. Taoism knows no longer the *Tao*.

The St. Paul of this story was one Chuang-Tze. He lived more than a century after his master, at the same time as Mencius, the greatest disciple of Confucius; but whereas the two Sages had seen that their systems were complementary, the disciples were bitter opponents, for Chuang-Tze led a violent reaction against the growing power of Confucianism. He wrote a further book of imaginary episodes and anecdotes and sayings of the Taoist sages, and although it made of Taoism more of a coherent system than Lao-Tze had done in the *Tao-Te-Ching*, and was in many ways more poetic and literary, much had been lost. There came in the element of magic, miracle and the supernatural.

During the Han dynasty, from the second century B.C. until the second century A.D., Taoism received such encouragement at Court

that it might be said to be the official religion. King Tai, who reigned from 156 B.C., ordered Lao-Tze's book to be studied at Court, and thus gave it royal standing. The element of magic, however, had almost submerged the original simplicity. The search was not now so much for virtue as for a formula of immortality, some elixir of life. One of the Han Emperors fitted up an expedition to search for the Isles of the Blest. Attempts to become genii led men to strange experiments with drugs, and to a number of physical experiments closely akin to the Hindu idea of Yogi. As with the alchemists of the West, who were to search to transmute lead to gold, all this had a by-product in actual scientific and medical discovery and in physics.

Early in the second century A.D. a certain Chang Tao-ling organised Taoism into a definite religion. Buddhism had come and was establishing its temples and monasteries and images, and Taoism did the same. The religion which had started as a pure movement of the human spirit, an attempt to save it from formalism and sacerdotalism became itself steeped in these things. The religion which sought the abstract ideal beyond God became a complicated polytheism with a Trinity of divinities at its head, of whom Lao-Tze himself was one and a strange person called the Jade Emperor another. Vaguely there was a First Principle higher than these. Beneath these "Celestial Perceptrors" innumerable genii fairies operated, including "The Eight Immortals" who figure so often in Chinese art. The whole metaphysic was obscure and mattered scarcely at all beside the occultism and magic which went on at the temples and monasteries. The incredible superstitions of a simple and illiterate peasantry were catered for on a definitely cash basis by monks who ultimately became notorious for their laziness. The principle of inaction advocated by the Founder for the sake of spiritual growth became mere inaction. In a progressive deterioration Taoism became a breeding-ground of superstition, its chief task the warding off of evil spirits.

Against all this must be remembered its wonderful service to art and literature. If Confucianism sought truth and order, Taoism made for beauty and freedom. Emphasising always the free life of the senses, the ecstasy of the contemplative mind in face of Nature and Nature's way, the satisfaction of wild scenery of mountain and river, cloud and mist, Taoism inspired art and poetry for century

after century. It linked with the historic doctrines of *Yang* and *Yin* that of the eternal *Tao*. Equally in literature the Taoist poets were saying, more than a thousand years before him, what our own Words-worth said ; whilst the conception of fairies and genii and innumerable stories of their doings, brought into being a lovely and romantic prose literature of unexcelled charm. Taoism was indeed the triumph of the free mind of man finding its satisfaction in quietness and inward peace. And from all its shortcomings of later centuries we can turn again to the fountain for refreshment of spiritual wisdom, the *Tao-Te-Ching* which the Old Philosopher wrote 2,500 years ago and which still stands as a signpost to the Path we are not yet noble enough to take.



The Wisdom of the Tao

“Without going out of doors one may know the whole world ; without looking out of the window one may see the way to heaven. The farther one travels the less one may know. Thus it is that without moving you shall know ; without looking you shall see ; without doing you shall achieve.”



“Among men, reject none ; among things, reject nothing. This is called comprehensive intelligence.”



“He who acts, destroys ; he who grasps, loses.”



“Wherever there is attachment there is bondage. When the bondage is released, there is happiness. This is the essence of cultivating life.”



“The misery I suffer comes from over attention to my own self.”



“Repose, inaction, tranquility, stillness—these are the levels of the Universe, the ultimate perfection of *Tao*.”



“The way out into the light often looks dark, the way that goes ahead often looks as if it went back.”

"I have three things precious which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness ; the second is frugality ; the third is humility which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold ; be frugal and you can be liberal ; avoid putting yourself before others, and you can become a leader among men."



"Whosoever adapteth himself shall be preserved to the end.
Whosoever bendeth himself shall be straightened.
Whosoever emptieth himself shall be filled.
Whosoever weareth himself away shall be renewed.
Whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.
Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.

Therefore doth the Sage cling to simplicity, and is an example to all men. Because he doth not compete with others, no man is his enemy."



"The net of heaven has large meshes, and yet nothing escapes it."



"With virtue and quietness one may conquer the world."



"He is wise who knows others ; he who knows himself is enlightened.

He is strong who conquers others ; he who conquers himself is mighty."



"The good man will feel kindly toward all creatures. He will reform himself and so transform others. He will pity the orphans and widows. He will respect the old and cherish the young. He will not hurt even insects, grass and trees. He will regard the gains and losses of others as if they were his own. He will endure insult without resenting it, and bestow favours without seeking for a return."



"The perfect man is peaceful like the Tao."

C R E D O

THE BELIEFS OF CONFUCIANISM

TRADITION, authority, obedience : upon these three fundamentals rests man's security and happiness. So declared Confucius to the Chinese people more than five centuries before Christ, and all his life was devoted to establishing his precepts of right behaviour in the state and the family. His doctrines were based on the acceptance of a rigid order. At the head of the state stood the Emperor, and beneath him, rank upon rank, the whole people were ranged, each class and individual having duties to those above and responsibilities to those below. At the head of the family stood the eldest parent, and again there was a careful grading of rights and privileges balanced against responsibilities. There were no metaphysics ; nothing concerning the after-life ; nothing speculative concerning the structure of the world or the place of spirits or of any God. Confucianism was a method of living the good life in this world, and of establishing a stable society. Even at its initiation it looked back, and founded its laws on those of some earlier golden age of Chinese history ; and from then until our own time its rigid pattern of good living and balanced morality, of calm and courtesy, has dominated the Chinese social structure.

CONFUCIUS AND MORAL LAW

*The Story of
Confucianism*

TWO spirits are always in conflict in human affairs : one striving for freedom, breaking out into new expressions, finding new channels ; the other trying to establish exact bounds, formalising, crystallising. We find them in art and literature as the romantic and classic movements. In political life they are respectively revolutionary and conservative ; in the church, reformatory against the traditional and authoritarian. Both are necessary. The one breaks new ground ; the other first opposes the movement, and then, accepting it or much of it, eventually establishes the new boundaries and again marks them with rigid lines : thus far and no farther.

Because of this process the work of almost all the great reformers and revolutionaries becomes, in due course, itself hide-bound and opposed to some ultimate attempt to reform it. Then, too, there is a tendency for things to slip back into the old ways, so that the work of many reformers has been to try to get back some earlier spirit or ideal, as, say, St. Francis did when he reminded the proud authoritarian church of his day of the simplicity of the teaching of Jesus and the ways of the primitive church. All this is true of mankind all over the world, in the East as in the West ; and in the age-long history of China Confucianism has been a conservative and stabilising element. But when first K'ung-fu-tzu (whose Latinised name became Confucius to the Western World) taught his doctrines in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. it was as one of those reformers who urged his people to get back to an almost forgotten Golden Age of the Emperor *Yao* and *Than* when, according to legend, government, social habits, religion, and morality were firm and established. His times were those same days of civil wars and feudal strife which drove Lao-Tze to advocate that every man should find peace within himself and in the ordered ways of Nature. Born half a century after the Old Philosopher, and therefore being a young man when Lao-Tze

was already old, Confucius sought the salvation of China in another direction. Let us, he said, make a good state with an ordered government and laws, let us all firmly obey these laws and those in authority over us—the Emperor in society, the father in the family . . . ; let us draw up careful rules of conduct private and public. So will every man be enabled to live a happy, secure and good life. In Greece, half across the world, Socrates and his noble disciple Plato came to the same conclusion. Confucius, however, had one great advantage over these Greeks, that he was able to call upon an inspiring history dating back thousands of years, and to make the ancient laws and customs his rallying ground for the new order which he advocated, whereas Plato had to plan his Republic and its laws on virgin soil. Both men were anxious that some prince should give them the opportunity of putting their theories into practice, both went in search of such a patron ; both found that the princes of this world were not easily induced to establish ideal states.

“Let a prince employ me,” says Confucius optimistically, “and in a twelve-month much would be done, in three years government would be perfected.”

But the princes who employed him turned again to the sensuous distractions of their dancing-girls, and drove the philosopher-statesman into exile as Dionysus of Sicily turned from the wisdom of Plato and had him arrested and sold in the slave-market. Nevertheless the doctrines of Confucius became the accepted basis of Chinese society, took unto themselves so vast an authority, rooted so deeply in the nature of man and things, that they can claim to be a religion, a religion which for more than two thousand years has enormously influenced the lives of countless millions of people.

This Confucius was born in 551 B.C. in the little village of Ch'ush in the Province of Lu which is now part of Shantung. The family of K'ung were left poor, for the father, a soldier of some distinction, died when the boy was only three years old. A later historian, Sau-ma Ch'ien, writing in the second century B.C., has told us that Confucius was of humble birth.

“Countless are the prophets and princes that the world has seen in its time,” writes this recorder, “glorious in life, forgotten in death. But Confucius, though only a humble member of the

cotton-clothed masses, remains among us after many generations. He may indeed be called the divinest of men."

At the age of nineteen Confucius was married, not very happily according to report, a fact which may have influenced him in his poor opinion of women. Three children were born of the marriage ; Li, the son, and two daughters ; but we hear little more of this family background of the teacher's life. Philosophers and families seem seldom to make for harmony. Already he was establishing himself as a teacher and a working official of the state, for soon we find him the keeper of the grain stores and the controller of the fields, positions which must have been of some importance in an agricultural community.

It was during this first period of work in his native state that he went up to the capital of Chow, the "Middle Kingdom," and met Lao-Tze at the Court there. Confucius was still only twenty-two years of age, with a growing reputation as a teacher ; the Old Philosopher was already a man of over seventy, and he distrusted the practical activity of the youthful historian, sage and civil servant.

" You talk of your admiration of the ancients," cried the old man. " All these men have mouldered into dust. All your historical knowledge is vain and empty. Resign your study, cultivate virtue and seek Tao ; learn that talk breeds only confusion of mind ; enter on that way which can never be forgotten."

After the immemorial manner of the young, Confucius continued in his own way of life and teaching. Nevertheless he deeply admired the elder master.

" I know how birds fly, how fishes swim, and how beasts run. But I cannot tell how the dragon mounts on the winds and rises into the heavens. One can snare the beast, hook the fish, and shoot the bird with an arrow. But Lao-Tze is the dragon ; him I cannot overcome."

The compliment is the greater in that the dragon in Chinese thought and symbolism has always been the highest expression of *Yang*, the principle of heaven, and so of divinity and of the Emperor.

Back in his native Lu, Confucius found himself at the head of a body of several thousand disciples. But whatever wisdom was centred in this little band did not extend to the kingdom, for it was already being torn asunder by civil strife, and soon the Duke Chao,

under whom Confucius was employed, was defeated by the turbulent war lords and driven to take refuge in the neighbouring state. Loyal alike to his Duke and to his own precepts, Confucius followed him into exile. Feeling that the rule in the new state lacked the integrity which he demanded, he refused to take any office and for many years remained an obscure teacher. But Confucius was destined to have his day. At the end of the century, in 501 B.C., Duke Ting became ruler of Lu, and called him to aid in government. The Sage was turned fifty, but was at the height of his mental powers, and as Minister of Works and of Crimes he set to work to make Lu a model state. For a brief season the philosopher and ruler were one person, as Plato advocated, and the results were as splendid as even the great Greek could have wished. Crime and immorality almost disappeared. Confucius fixed the price of goods ; he organised employment according to the capacities of the people, and the diet of the workers according to their work ; he put down oppression by the rich and gave justice without bribery. In all his personal life he most punctiliously observed the rules which he had taught, giving obsequious respect to those above him and insisting upon a rigid standard of etiquette from those below. This exact observance of duty and ceremonial respect between one person and another according to their positions is the basis of Confucian teaching. He believed tremendously in the importance of good example from those in authority and therefore placed his own life above suspicion.

That such a policy of absolute justice would make enemies was inevitable, and the enemies of Confucius worked craftily for his overthrow. The legend is that they presented to the Duke a number of beautiful dancing-girls who turned the young man's mind from the affairs of state to a life of selfish pleasure, which inevitably brought forth the rebuke of Confucius and led to a rupture between Duke and minister. Confucius might, as part of his moral code, address the Duke in awed tones and pretend to tremble in his presence, but when the need came to rebuke him for his laxity this was done fearlessly, and the price was paid : the faithful minister was dismissed the Court.

So in the year 497 B.C. he set forth on his wanderings, seeking a master who would truly accept the discipline of good government, and for fourteen years with his little band of disciples he went from place

to place, often in peril of his life, always in neglect and poverty, treated, as he said, "like a stray dog." In 483 B.C. his native Lu was officially governed by a ten-year-old Duke, and the lad called the ageing philosopher back to help in the government. Politics had proved too unhappy and disappointing, however; Confucius came home to Lu, but he settled there as a scholar, historian and teacher. He had come to realise that his ideas were more important than any immediate experiment in application. He collected the ancient annals, folk-tales and poems of the state, and edited them with his own implied moral lesson. *The Spring and Autumn Annals*; a *Book of History* with a wonderful introduction; a *Book of Songs*; a volume of *Rites and Ceremonies*: the writings of those last five years of the troubled life of Confucius were a brilliant sunset. He knew more now of men than when he had talked with Lao-Tze fifty years before, but his beliefs had not changed. Still he urged a life of mutual courtesy and obedience to exactly defined relationships; still he pleaded for a society based on *Jen*, a word that comprises benevolence, charity, altruism and kindness; still he underlined the importance of *Li*, the old ritual vessel which is the symbol of all ceremonial observance, and that orderliness, proportion and harmony of which ceremony is the expression. That final teaching and writing has dominated the Chinese mind over thousands of years, and has intermingled with whatever other religion and government held official sway. "By these I shall be known and by these I shall be judged," he told his disciples as he presented the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to them.

In the year 478 B.C. the great Sage died. His dearest disciple, Tse-Kung, recorded that the Master had had a dream of ancient funeral rites, an omen of his own death. "The great mountain must crumble, the strong beam must break and the wise man withers like a plant," he said. He was buried by the side of the River Sze near the city of Lu, and there his tomb is still to be seen.

After his death his disciples collected his sayings as they remembered them or as they had written them down, and the book of *Analects*, *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean* preserved the wisdom, much of it that of earlier sages whose words and doctrines Confucius had adopted. Thus we have a true record of what the Master said, did, believed, and taught, quite apart from the large apocryphal literature of later centuries.

One hundred years after his death, Mencius, "The Second Inspired One," the St. Paul of Confucianism, was born. He too was a native of Lu, and he opened a school of philosophy to study the tenets of Confucius, and then in middle life started a series of missionary journeys from court to court to endeavour to spread the teaching. His own unbending personality and the rigidity of the version of Confucianism which he advocated may have been the cause of his failure, and at last he turned away from the world which would not listen to him and spent the last decades of his life in retirement. He stressed the doctrine of the innate goodness of man which had been part of Confucius' own teaching ; and he seems to have had a more definite conception of the One God who, according to Mencius, tested men by trouble, pain and affliction. Confucius, for his own part, had always hesitated to give his opinion upon the nature of God or of anything supernatural. He disclaimed all communion with God or any direct message from Him, had nothing to say of the after-life and knew nothing of divinity. If he refers to Heaven or Providence it is as an abstraction whose orderliness or law might be called Will. Once, for instance, when he was in danger he said to his fearful disciples :

" After the death of the Emperor Wan, was not the cause of the right way lodged with me ? While Heaven does not wish this cause to perish what can the anger of the people of K'Wang do to me ? "

This suggests a fairly definite personal belief in a spiritual government which is almost personal. But on the other hand he continually rebuked those who devoted themselves to spirits and neglected the right relationships of this world.

" While you cannot serve men, how can you serve spirits ? " he asks. Which is no denial of the existence of spirits but only the emphasis upon ethics. This insistence upon goodness for the sake of society and ethics, based on no other-worldly sanction, makes of Confucianism as he taught it rather a philosophy than a religion, although it had all the effects of religion. Indeed, it is perhaps going too far to say that his teachings have no sanction outside the minds and conveniences of men, for he himself is recorded as having said to a disciple who questioned the value of the Rites :

"These rules are rooted in heaven, have their correspondences on earth, and are applicable to spiritual beings."

This goes near to the acceptance of a Tao, a spiritual way, which was the main doctrine of the rival religion of Taoism. Out of the prehistoric past this conception of a preordained relationship between the principles of heaven and of earth had held the Chinese mind. Confucius reduced it to an exact system of conduct for all occasions, and Mencius further stabilised it.

Once there was a direct frontal attack upon Confucianism, when in 246 B.C. Shi Hwang-ti made himself Emperor of China and decided that he would establish a completely New Order which should owe nothing to the old and should dispose of the feudal idea. He ordered a wonderful burning of the books—an attempt to suppress ideas such as we have seen in our own time. The scholars were executed, the books were burnt, the Great Wall was built across the north of China to protect and isolate it from its enemies without. But the dictator of twenty-two centuries ago failed, and with his passing the wonderful Han dynasty came into being. For four hundred years China knew a period of comparative peace and consolidation. It is not too much to say that Confucianism was the backbone of that period of national greatness. The study of the Confucian books and the system of competitive examinations upon them as the basis of government service and of all scholarship began at this time and continued until our own century.

More dangerous to its supremacy was the coming of Buddhism, which was introduced into China in the first century A.D. Its success probably arose from the desire in the heart of men for something which satisfied their deeper spiritual natures. The mysticism and other-worldliness of the new faith acted as a complement to the humanism of the teaching of their own Sage; and in that strange fashion of the Oriental mind the two faiths lived side by side, modifying each other to some extent and each administering to different phases of the same individual. All the old ancestor worship, a sprinkling of Taoism, and much that had remained from the prehistoric worship of many gods and the propitiation of demons: all these things went together into Chinese religion. Confucianism was the stabilising social factor.

So Confucianism gradually established itself as the ethical basis

of Chinese life. If it was not a religion at the beginning it rapidly acquired all the characteristics of one. Confucian temples were established by law in every town and district, and the old-time elaborate ritual of ancestor worship became based on the Chinese ideal of the family. Thus the whole vast system of private and public ceremonial, so dear to the heart of the Chinese, took these teachings of Confucius as their sanction.

All this had the fault which inevitably threatens any kind of ritual : it can so easily become a dead letter from which the spirit has departed. On the other hand, it gives the strength of unity and the authority of tradition, binding together what might otherwise fall apart. In this respect China is enormously indebted to Confucianism. Its spirit, too, is vital and noble. It has its blind spots, not the least of which is its attitude towards women, which encourages polygamy and the undervaluing of the girl child. Confucianism, however, is based on the deliberate will to be good and to serve one's fellowmen. Its ideal is not set so high that it cannot be attained by any one of goodwill. It imposes a personal and social discipline which, simply because it is attainable, is accepted and expected of everybody. Reciprocity, give and take, is its keynote.

“What you do not want done to yourself, do not to others.”

The Golden Rule was one of its basic doctrines, stated negatively instead of in the positive manner of the words of Jesus. Nor has it that dynamic principle of love which characterises Christianity. In place of love are discipline and duty. “Recompense kindness with kindness, and injury with justice” does not go nearly so far as the Christian “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you.” On the other hand, it has to be remembered that Confucians do live up to their principles in this matter, whereas the Christian Church has modified the teaching of their Master. The Chinese Sage advocated from the beginning the thing which the normal man could attain, and eventhen he rebukes himself for his failure to reach his own ideal.

He says. “I have not fully learnt to serve my father as I would have my son serve me ; to serve my elder brother as I would have my younger brother serve me ; to behave to my friend as I would have him behave to me.”

One notes the idea of reciprocity in this utterance, the belief in

service as the basis of good living, and the indication that the Higher or Superior Man, that is the Good Man, *learns* to be good. Not by mere meditation, but by study and the training of study. Truth is chiefly a knowledge of one's faults when conduct is weighed against the laws, rules and conventions of society.

So high did Confucius place the Superior Man that, as we have seen, he did not feel that he himself was able fully to claim the title.

So until our own day this noble voice out of ancient China has had its tremendous audience. The first disciples, the "two or three lads," of whom Confucius spoke, have become the hundreds of millions of the Chinese people throughout more than two thousand years ; and Confucius himself has been recognised by the whole world as one of the most noble and saintly of all men.

❖ ❖ ❖
The Wisdom of Confucius

"A great army may be robbed of its leader, but nothing can rob a poor man of his will."



"To be in one's inmost mind in kindly sympathy with all things ; to love all men ; to allow no selfish thoughts : this is the nature of benevolence and righteousness."



"The Superior Man clings to virtue, the Inferior Man clings to material comfort."



"Benevolence is the distinguishing characteristic of man. As embodied in man's conduct it is called the path of duty."



"All within the four seas are brothers."



"The man of honour thinks of his character; the Inferior man, of his position. The man of honour desires justice; the Inferior man, favour."



"The real fault is to have faults and not to try and amend them."



"The ways are two ; love and want of love. That is all."

C R E D O

THE BELIEFS OF HINDUISM

OLDEST of all existing faiths, Hinduism, the national religion of the hundreds of millions of inhabitants of India, brings to our own time the teeming polytheism of the first religions. Brahma is the great universal Spirit behind all things, but Vishnu the Preserver and Siva the Destroyer equally rule the world, and beneath them countless gods of things and forces demand worship.

In this welter of conflicting divinity Man can only find ultimate happiness by escape from life and its myriad reincarnations, and this can be achieved only by renunciation. The ways of life and of the gods themselves, as revealed by the marvellous ancient literature of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and later in the two poems, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, offer no hope in this world. So every man must escape by exactly fulfilling his duties in the caste wherein he was born, and by moving at last to a life of pure asceticism and meditation.

HINDUISM: FAITH OF MANY GODS

*The Story of
Hinduism*

ONE of the strangest of all faiths, and one of the most important in the formation of the world of to-day and to-morrow, is that of the Hindus. In the first place, it is the accepted religion of more than 250,000,000 people ; and its acceptance is not the half-hearted lip service made to many other great religions, but something which influences almost every action of daily life, social conduct and thought. In the second place, it is being made the dynamic of a political nationalism which, if it succeeds (and even those opposed to it realise that it ultimately may succeed), will create a political-religious national group gathered in one locality and outnumbering all the Anglo-Saxons in the world.

Such things are not to be disregarded ; they are the stuff of which history is made.

Apart from this practical aspect, however, Hinduism is fascinating for its own sake. It stands for completely different values in life from those of Christianity as Christianity has developed in the Western World. It demands practices and an order of society, therefore, which are different from, and in some ways utterly opposed to, our conceptions of the good life. Indeed, its whole idea of essential goodness differs from our own. Yet it has produced one of the noblest literatures, a vast number of saintly devotees, and a conception of the nature of God and the universe which is at least challenging.

Hinduism is one of the very oldest religions, dating historically from the period of the great Aryan invasion of Northern India about 1,700 B.C., and having its twofold roots in the religion of the Aryans themselves and in that of the original inhabitants of Northern India, the Dravidians. The ruined cities of the Dravidians, which are only now being unearthed by archaeologists in the vast river valley of the Indus, reveal that these people had a marvellous civilisation at a date prior to 2,000 B.C. Those mile-square ruins of Mohenjodaro, Harappa

and other cities show elaborate town-planning, with wide roads enclosing rectangular blocks of brick-built, two-storey houses, communal granaries and baths. To have such things there must have been some central authority functioning in a highly civilised fashion. We know nothing definite of their religion, for there are no temple buildings, and the small amount of writing which has come to light has not yet been decoded. But we may assume that it had the features common to most Bronze Age religions. Mankind in that period invariably created many gods out of its fear and awe of the forces of Nature and its desire to ensure fertility of the earth and of beasts. The seasons, the weather, the earth and the sky governed life ; ritual and the gods grew up around these as man tried to propitiate whatever spirits were felt to be behind them. So these people of Northern India were polytheists with a particular worship of horned cattle.

The Dravidians themselves had invaded India from the north-west and defeated the yet older inhabitants. They were, in turn, defeated by the all-conquering Aryans, a self-given name which means "the noble ones"—in fact, the *Herrenvolk* of that remote time. They would have brought with them their own religious cults and legends, and these would have become mingled with those of the folk they conquered ; for polytheism is usually accommodating in this way, since a few more gods can easily be added and the gods of any particular locality can simply be shown to be the same as existing divinities.

The Aryan people came to India with one wonderful gift : the fine Sanskrit language which links with the whole group of the European languages and reveals our common ancestry with these Western Asiatic folk. They also brought their own trinity of gods —Agni, the god of Fire ; Indra, the god of rain ; and Surya, the sun-god. These divinities obviously have their respective dominions over earth, air and heaven, and are connected with the three elements most necessary to the life of man on the earth. Agni, the fire-god, as we would expect, was the especial friend of man. Soon all three gods were given wives, who, if they were not quite so definitely worshipped, nevertheless attracted their special religious devotees.

From the older religions of the Dravidian people, however, came other primitive gods and certain ideas about the powers behind the

universe such as we might expect from a country and climate like that of India. The jungle ; the teeming life of beast, bird and insect, and vegetation ; the terrific power of rain and lightning and the roar of thunder when the monsoon broke the terrible heat of summer ; the vast fecundity and swift birth and death of all living things : these phenomena of Nature were reflected in the primeval Dravidian beliefs, and rapidly became influences upon the minds of the newcomers. One most important conception was that of *Karma*, the continual coming back to earth in some shape of every spirit. Along with it stood the idea that the good were reincarnated into happier circumstances, the bad into worse. Little distinction or none was made between man and animal : a mean, thieving man might come back as a rat, a murderer as a tiger. Then through hundreds, thousands, millions, if need be, of successive lives the spirit climbed back to human level, and at last climbed beyond it through saintliness to escape from the long cycle of births and deaths. Escape from earth ! Escape from the body ! That became the dream of the Hindu. Somewhere behind all this struggling, seething, painful life of the world, beyond even that of the gods who reflected the world, was the all-embracing spirit of Brahma. To become absorbed into that spirit, freed from mortality, from individuality, from the material body, from the senses, from any earthly desire even, that was the ideal.

“ He who excludes from his mind all external objects, who restrains his senses and understanding, from whom desire, fear and wrath have departed, is indeed for ever released from birth and death. He, knowing the great Lord of all worlds and Friend of all beings, attains tranquillity.”

Albert Schweitzer has called it “ World and Life negation,” and it is the background against which we must see all Indian thought and affairs.

This was the philosophy of the first definite phase, when the *Veda*, the Divine Knowledge, was revealed to the Inspired Ones and written down in the thousand hymns of the *Rig-Veda*. These poems are things of beauty and great spiritual insight. They were composed between 1,500 and 1,000 B.C. ; and during the next two hundred years other *Vedas* were added, more hymns, liturgies, charms, incantations. All address themselves to the gods, they turn away from this world, they pray for release from earthly interests.

Imperceptibly this first phase, the Vedantic, moves into the second, that of Brahminism. It centres round the worship and contemplation of Brahma as the one spirit of the universe ; it encourages a special group of devotees to give their entire lives to this worship and to meditate continually on Brahma. Soon the more extreme of them are taking a drug, *soma*, to give them a trance-like ecstasy in which the things of this world are forgotten. Better than this was the invention of a technique of intensive breathing and meditative exercises which the Hindus called *Yoga*. These also were devised to shut out the ordinary physical world and to leave the soul in mystic communication with Brahma. The Hindus have a genius for this kind of discipline of the body which yields amazing results : their fakirs can dig nails into their flesh yet feel no pain, can walk on burning ashes yet not be hurt. The material body is proved to be completely subject to the mind and spirit.

It was but one step from this to consider everything which came through the senses in the ordinary way to be illusion, *maya*, and to hold that the only reality lay in spiritual unity with Brahma.

“ Brahma exists truly, the world falsely ; the soul is only Brahma and no other.”

It was a beautiful but dangerous doctrine.

Another equally dangerous belief, yet having within it a certain truth, was the doctrine of caste. Brahma, it asserted, had created separate orders of mankind from separate parts of his body : out of the head came the Brahmins, the holy men ; out of the arms, the warriors ; out of the trunk, the agriculturists and tradesmen ; out of the feet, the servants. At the beginning this may have been put forward so as to get an orderly and stable social order, but it became the rigid basis of Hindu life and one of the terrible curses of the Hindu world. As it was eventually interpreted, caste has clamped down on more than sixty million Hindus with the stigma of untouchability and put them beyond the pale of their fellows. Their touch or even their shadow pollutes, so that they may not go to the same temples or schools, draw water from the same fountains, touch the same food, walk the same side-walk. They do the most filthy and menial work for the community with practically no opportunity of cleansing themselves, since the wells and fountains are not for them. The

provision of education or even of worship is rendered almost impossible. Caste became the basic thing in Hindu religion and life, and remains so in spite of all attempts to remove or reform it. It is one of the greatest obstacles to Indian progress. Yet one can realise how in the early times when there was need to establish some sort of social order this division of function guarded by an elaborate system of taboos had its justification.

In those early times when Hinduism was still Brahminism it was probably the most spiritual religion in the world. Along with the magnificent literature of the *Vedas* stood the *Upanishads*, composed somewhere between 800 and 500 B.C. They are poetic-philosophic utterances which embody the thoughts of the Aryan people upon the nature of God and of life and upon the workings of *Karma*. They are the high note of this religion, created when it emerged from its beginnings and was an inquiring philosophy trying to find the meaning of the universe. In them we have the doctrines of Brahminism at their best. They move away from the early polytheism and come near to a monotheism wherein all Nature is regarded as being infused with the one spirit of Brahma. They give us the ideas of *Karma* and of the birth and death cycle in its finest form. They establish the laws of *Yoga*. The word *Upanishad* means "sitting close to," and truly in these pieces there is a sense of sitting close to the source of universal life.

But India was yet to dominate the religion of her people. That climate, the teeming life, the terror of tropic storms, inevitably crushed the thoughts of men and moulded them into its own grotesque image. The old polytheism returned. Brahma might be the universal spirit behind all things, but things themselves had their own gods. Vishnu the Preserver became the chief of the Nature gods, and over against him was set Siva the Destroyer, for any man could see that some terrible force of destruction was at work. Rapidly an enormous number of gods grew from the original trinity. Separate sects began to worship special manifestations of divinity, and to give their cults importance by weaving legends around their respective gods. Siva, for instance, had two sons, Kartikeya the god of war, and Ganesha the god of worldly wisdom. This latter especially became a favourite subject of worship, and his image with childish limbs and an elephant's head, squatting on a seat of skulls and attended by his rat, is a frequent

idol in Hindu temples. To European thought this image is monstrous ; but the Hindu, believing all life of man and animal to be one, can without incongruity unite the human and the bestial in this way. Also he can give Siva or Vishnu four or more arms, or three heads, without feeling it to be unnatural. The jungle, not the human, is the inspiration of Hindu thought and form. Man is not the measure of things as he is in the Western World.

The expression of all this next crystallized in two great epic poems : the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. They probably arose, as we suspect the poems of Homer did, as a series of disconnected ballads which gradually gathered to themselves different details of the stories, between the years 1,000 and 500 B.C. Then for the next thousand years they were being given exact form and eventually being written down. To-day they are among the greatest epic poetry of the world. The *Ramayana* alone has about 48,000 verses ; and the *Mahabharata* is eight times as long as the *Odyssey* and the *Illiad* together, having about 100,000 stanzas. The former tells the story of *Ramayana* the prince of Oudh, whose wife was captured by a giant who ruled over Ceylon, and was eventually recaptured by her husband with the aid of an army of monkeys. It is one of the reasons why the monkey is particularly sacred in India to-day, and since it must not be destroyed makes itself an unchecked nuisance. The *Mahabharata* tells of the struggle between *Pandus*, the spirit of good, and *Kurus*, the spirit of evil. Both works contain the basic ideas of Hindu thought in the same way that the stories and legends of the Bible have in them the fundamental beliefs of Hebrew and Christian teaching. Interwoven with the legendary matter is much that is profoundly mystical. The *Mahabharata* especially has in it deep teaching ; and in their ultimate renunciation of an earthly kingdom for a heavenly one by the *Pandus*, after enduring great adversity at the hands of their enemies in this world, we have a symbol of the whole world-renouncing philosophy of Hinduism.

Despite this ideal of other-worldliness, however, it contains also the doctrines of man's social and religious duties, his *dharma*, and of the duties of family life, *kama*. These latter are a very great part of Hinduism, the position of father and children, and more particularly of wife and mother, being strictly defined. Again there are the advantages and disadvantages of a rigid society.

"There is more happiness in performing one's own *dharma* imperfectly than in performing another man's *dharma* perfectly. It is blessed to die in one's own *dharma*."

So declares the poem. But perhaps its whole teaching is best summed up in the quotation :

"He becomes immortal who seeks the general good of man, who does not grieve, and who can renounce the world."

This ideal of world renunciation is the goal to which all roads in Hinduism lead.

Against this one must set the ideals which still nominally hold in Hinduism, and which are the inspiration of the many good Hindus who seek and find the good life through their religion. It provides for life to be lived in four stages : first, the student, bound by strict rules of discipline to his teacher ; then the householder, married and devoted to his family ; thirdly, a period after middle age when he goes into some form of solitary life for purposes of meditation, perhaps accompanied by his wife who is treading the same path of devotion ; and lastly, the hermit and ascetic, who has set himself the task of freeing his spirit from earthly ties and desires and wishes only to live the contemplative life. In this process the second period in particular is consecrated to normal good living, with the family as its basis ; but throughout the whole life there is need for ethical conduct. Conjugal faithfulness is of enormous importance, and all forms of family affection are stressed. Indeed, one of the finest aspects of Hinduism is this tie of family, and another is the discipline of food and drink which its many taboos enforce. Again, it is good and natural that old age should be devoted increasingly to serenity and self-control and the release from sensuous pleasures and desires.

From the ancient *Code of Manu*, one of the earliest books of laws of conduct, one could quote rules of conduct as exalted as those of any religion.

"Be not angry with the angry, give blessings for curses."

"No study of the Vedas, no sacrifices, no alms, can lead to heaven him who is inwardly depraved."

"Wound not another, though by him provoked."

"He who befriends all creatures is the true Brahmin."

Whenever a saint has arisen in India—and all through the centuries India has produced its saints—he has turned back to such noble teaching. Often he has turned a reforming zeal upon Hinduism itself, as, for instance, Debendranath Tagore, the father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, did ; or Nanak, the famous sixteenth-century teacher who founded the Sikh sect, condemning caste, polytheism and the excesses of ritual and priesthood ; or Kabir, who back in the fifteenth century also condemned these evils of Hinduism. Any religion must be judged by its noblest teachings and exemplars as well as by its failures. Hinduism in its vast amorphous body can include saint and sinner, ascetic and sensualist, the highest mysticism and the basest witchcraft, the most modern philosophic thought and the oldest animism, all beliefs, all aspirations, as well as all gods. That is at once the success and the bane of this the most ancient of the world's great religions.



The Wisdom of the Hindus

“ This is the sum of all true righteousness—treat others as thou wouldst thyself be treated. Do nothing to thy neighbour which hereafter thou wouldst not have thy neighbour do to thee, in causing pleasure or in giving pain, in doing good, or injury to others.”



“ Let the wise man give up his goods for the sake of his neighbour, for the sake of the good let him even give his life.”



“ Truth, self-control, asceticism, generosity, non-injury, constancy in virtue—these are the means of success, not caste or family.”



“ Those who have forsaken the killing of any ; those who are helpmeets to all ; those who are a sanctuary to all : those men are on the way to heaven.”



“ He by whom the world is not afflicted nor troubled, who also is not afflicted nor troubled by the world, who is freed from the agitated lower nature, and from its waves of joy and fear and anxiety and resentment, he is dear to God.”

" Liberality with kindly words ; knowledge without pride ; bravery with forbearance ; wealth with contempt of possessions : these are four excellences hard to find."



" The man who forsakes all desires and moves without longing, without the thought of ' mine ' or ' I,' attains to peace."



" He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrow, and amid pleasures is free from desire, from whom liking and fear and wrath have passed away, is the sage of settled understanding."



" By gifts conquer a man who never gives ; by truthfulness subdue untruthful men ; vanquish an angry man by gentleness ; and overcome the evil man by goodness."



" Haunting solitude, eating little, with speech, body and mind restrained, intent on meditation and ever resorting to absence of passion ; free from the thought of I, from violence, pride, desire, anger, possessions, thinking not of mine, and calmed, he is fit to become Brahma."



" This is the sum of duty : do naught to others which, if done to thee, would cause thee pain."

CREDO

THE BELIEFS OF THE BUDDHISTS

SICKNESS, suffering, pain, frustration, death : these are the inevitable conditions of earthly life. How shall a soul escape ? Not through death, for that inevitably leads only to rebirth millions upon millions of times under that law of Karma which causes the conditions of each reincarnation to be governed by the merits earned or lost in the previous earth-life. Only, therefore, by ceasing to desire anything of this world, and by living in eternal mystical communion with Brahma, the Spirit of the Universe. This is Nirvana, the ultimate bliss.

This was the wisdom which came as enlightenment to Gautama, the Buddha, the Enlightened One, that Prince of India who renounced throne, wife and child, and all earthly possessions that he might find the true way of life. Five hundred years before Christ he gained that knowledge and set out to teach it, and to-day nearly two hundred million people in the Eastern world accept that faith.

BUDDHA, THE ENLIGHTENED

*The Story of
Buddhism*

THE two greatest religious systems of the world are Christianity and Buddhism. Each can claim something like 500,000,000 adherents, if in either case we add together all the different sects ; for Buddhism, like Christianity, has in its long history broken into many groups each claiming to be the true interpretation of the teachings of the Founder or a justifiable expansion of them. Both religions began as movements to reform the existing faith of its country and time ; both were initiated by a Teacher so great and good and with such tremendous spiritual power that the reform became a wonderful new thing and broke away altogether from the old faith. Thus Jesus was first of all a Jew whose teaching unfolded out of His native Hebrewism ; and Gautama a Hindu whose enlightenment came from devotion to the Hinduism of the Upanishads. Both in their marvellous growth shattered the vessels in which they were rooted.

Indeed there are many similarities between the two faiths. Buddhism is more mystical and other-worldly ; Christianity more social and practical. But the deepest mystical teachers of Christianity have proclaimed truths which might well be Buddhist ; and the practice of the noblest followers of Buddhism has always been Christian in its loving-kindness, service and self-forgetfulness. At bottom, truth and goodness are indivisible.

Even the records of the lives of the two Founders have great similarities. Both are held to have been born of a virgin, and angels sang at their births ; wise men predicted of both that they should become the saviours of their people ; both left their homes for the life of the wandering preacher ; the deaths of both were marked by earthquakes and signs from heaven. These stories, however, may be born of the love and reverence of their followers. The truly miraculous thing about them both is that their lives were so noble and holy that

millions of men through the centuries have found their way to God through them.

The life-story of Gautama, even without the exaggerated legends which gathered round it, is fascinating and romantic. He was born in that remarkable sixth century B.C., a prince, the son of Suddhodana, king of the country of Kapilavastu in Northern India. Among the legends of his birth there is one of an announcement of it to his father by angels ; his mother Maya, "pure as a water-lily," saw a spirit from heaven descend to her in a dream, and so the child was born and was named Siddhartha, "The Completion of Purposes." Maya, her own purpose fulfilled, died when he was but a week old. At the ceremony of his naming, eight learned Brahmins were summoned by the king to prophesy of his future. They said that if he chose to live as a prince he would become monarch of the world ; but the youngest of them, Kondanna, said : "There is on his person no sign that he will continue to live the householder's life. He will undoubtedly become an enlightened one, and remove the veil of ignorance from the world."

"What will cause my son to retire from the world ?" demanded the king.

Kondanna answered, "He will see four signs : a decrepit old man, a sick man, a dead man, and a monk."

Thereupon the king decided to protect his son from the possibility of seeing these fatal things. Legend tells how he built three palaces and filled them with all luxuries, bidding the servants and guards to make sure that the prince remained ignorant of illness, sorrow and death. As Siddhartha grew up he was given by his father all manner of diversions, was surrounded by beautiful dancing-girls, and while he was still young was married to his cousin, the beautiful Princess Yasodhara.

"The thought ye cannot stay with golden chains
A girl's hair lightly binds."

Yet from the beginning, despite this life of sensuous ease, Siddhartha is said to have brooded on the least sign of suffering and to have sought the real meaning of life. Secretly he went out from the palace with Channa, his servant, and inevitably he saw the four predicted signs. Immediately his life-mission lay open before him :

he must solve this greatest of all problems, the problem of pain and of suffering. Death itself was no escape from it, for, according to the beliefs of Brahminism, the cycle of existence continued through millions of deaths and rebirths.

Siddhartha, now a young man of nearly thirty, stole a last look at his wife and his newly born son, Rahula, and accompanied by Channa left the palace. Soon he sent his servant back, and then for six years lived as an ascetic, studying Brahministic thought, meditating upon it, trying by any means to understand the mystery of life. First he went to one of the best-known teachers, Kalama, and then to another greater teacher, Uddaka. But although he learned all they had to teach he had no satisfaction, no assurance that he had attained freedom from earthly existence and the cycle of birth and death. That was the ideal which he sought in common with all saintly Hindus. So he turned from the pursuit of knowledge and tried the path of self-mortification, denying himself all comfort and all but a few grains of food each day. Still there came no peace nor hope of salvation.

Disappointed, he left the five ascetics who had shared his life of austerity, and for seven days sat at the foot of a Bodhi Tree in meditation. And there enlightenment came, the blessed assurance overwhelmed him. For a whole month more he stayed there. Mara, the Evil One, tempted him as Satan is said to have tempted Jesus. Great storms broke about him, rains drenched down through the forest, but nothing could harm him. The temptation to accept at once the fulfilment of his emancipation and to pass immediately through death to Nirvana, losing his own individuality in the all-embracing spirit of Brahma; that was the most subtle of his temptations. The idea that if he proclaimed his doctrine men would not accept it and he would only lose his own sense of quietude, that too threatened to turn him aside. But Buddha, the Enlightened One, felt that his own deep sense of blessing called him to the service of his fellow-men.

"I shall not die until this pure religion of mine shall have become successful, prosperous, widespread and popular," he averred.

So he set forth on the life-mission which was destined to last more than forty years. He decided that his first care should be the five ascetics. At first, angry that he had forsaken their way of attain-

ment, they would not listen ; but the radiance of his presence broke down their opposition, and so the Buddha gave the discourse which is known as "The Foundation of the Kingdom of Righteousness." As with the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus it contains the very soul of the teaching. In it he preached his doctrine of The Middle Way and of The Eightfold Path : ideas which are still the basis of Buddhism.

The Middle Way is a plea for a course between the earthly life of pleasure and the ascetic life of the denial of all claims of the flesh and appetites. This ascetic life was the accepted way to holiness of the Brahmin. The Eightfold Path which Buddha proclaimed was Right Belief, Right Aspiration or Purpose, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Means of Livelihood, Right Thought, Right Humility and Right Meditation or Rapture. In accordance with the methods of the physicians of his time Buddha proceeded to deal with this disease of suffering which afflicts humanity. He analysed it into its symptom, its cause, its cure, and the way to the cure. The pain of body and mind in the world was the symptom ; the cause was our attachment to things and to people in this world ; the cure was the attainment of Nirvana by ceasing to desire the things of this world and by living so that one would be released from further earthly existences ; and the way to the cure was by treading this Eightfold Path. These Four Noble Truths, this Eightfold Path, this Middle Way is the whole doctrine of primitive Buddhism as the Master preached it in his first sermon.

It has in it both the weakness that its ideal is world-renouncing, and the strength that the pursuit of that Eightfold Path would mean a Good Life. Indeed, the very first step along that Path demanded that Five Principles should be obeyed. No living creature should be killed, for any living thing might be a soul striving along the upward way ; nothing must be taken by force or by fraud, but on the contrary the true Buddhist is to give cheerfully and to receive gladly ; no lie is to be told ; all intoxicants are to be shunned ; the sins of the flesh are to be avoided. This made a good moral foundation, but it has always to be remembered that Buddhism is a personal religion not a social one. Its business is for the individual to rescue himself from the curse of recurring incarnation, and it has no real concern with making this world or society better, happier or more

comfortable. Indeed, it accepted from the beginning (and later was to accept more definitely) the idea that this world is an illusion of the senses. Nirvana, the goal of all living, means "waning out"—the waning out of everything connected with the body and the mind as the Self is absorbed into the Greater Self of Brahma. Such figures of speech as that of the merging of a dewdrop in the shining sea were used to convey the ideal.

That first sermon converted the five ascetics, who were thus the first Buddhist monks, with Gautama as the head of their Order. All became missionaries of the new idea. Buddha himself went to his wife and she became one of his first converts. The faith rapidly spread. It was an age which was remarkable for the passion with which men sought for the truth about life, and in India the soil was ready for just such a teaching as this. Legend may have exaggerated the number of the conversions, but unquestionably the new faith was successful. We have to remember that its appeal was not so much to the poor and humble as to the rich and cultured. Buddha was probably the most intellectual of all the great religious teachers, and his teaching had in it far too much abstract theory to attract the masses. The records of the first adherents is as markedly of noble and important people as those of Christianity are of the humble and lowly. The Buddha himself had reached enlightenment through satiety of this world's goods and the realisation that the best this world can offer is nevertheless vain to bring men happiness. Also he had thrown over the whole vast pantheon of the popular gods, and so lost another ground of easy conquest of the mass of the people. Buddhism has been called atheistic, and in the sense that it has no personal god or gods it deserves that description. Its conception of a vast impersonal Oversoul into which all men's souls are eventually absorbed is not really theistic.

For forty years the Buddha continued his work as a preacher and teacher. There is little connected story of this time in the early legends; only stray anecdotes which illustrate the teaching, and passages of the teaching itself. Very soon there was a vast monastic system, for the essential idea is of retirement from the world, and the monastery was an obvious outcome of such teaching. Wealthy adherents, as they were persuaded to renounce their riches, gave these to the establishment of monastic settlements and the endowment of build-

ings. The Order inevitably acquired its own distinctive dress and mannerisms. The monks wore yellow robes to denote their asceticism, tonsured their hair, and lived lives of poverty and chastity, renouncing homes and families. They begged their way when they went forth preaching, and were equipped only with their begging bowls. Inside the Order there was no recognition of the caste system which was so great a part of the social life outside it. But although Buddhism had no concern with caste, there was no deliberate attempt to reform it or to work or preach against it in the world, for, as we have seen, Buddhism does not regard the affairs of the world as its business. Caste merely belonged to the state of affairs which the monks had renounced, each for the saving of his individual soul. The idea of social reform as such had not yet been born in the world when Buddha taught, and the whole conception of his teaching was uninterested in it. So during the rainy season of each year he stayed in one of the many monastic settlements or houses, and for the rest, he wandered from place to place in Northern India preaching.

Gautama died at about the age of eighty at Oudh. Thousands upon thousands of converts already claimed to follow his teaching and he had indeed seen his pure religion "successful, popular, widespread and prosperous" as he had foretold forty years before. But the price of success may already have begun to be paid, for it is recorded that he said to his beloved friend Ananda, with whom he was travelling alone at the end of his life, "How hard it is to find those who will learn."

He may have seen the inevitable degeneracy : the decline of monastic meditation into the laziness which was its obvious temptation, the all-too-easy life of the begging preacher, the quarrels over points of doctrine and interpretation, the loss of real power of the spirit in a maze of words and metaphysics.

The problem still remains how much Gautama the mystic was concerned chiefly with ideas of the Self in its evolution towards absorption in the Greater Self, and how much he was a practical ethical teacher. Logically the good Buddhist, the treader of the Eightfold Path, is as morally bound as the Christian ; and practically he lives in kindness and service.

"Having laid aside onslaught on creatures, he lives as having laid aside the rod and the sword, lives ashamed to hurt, endued

with kindness, friendly and compassionate to all breathing, living things. Having put away the-taking-of-the-not-given, he lives taking only the given, expecting only the given, with a self become pure. Having put away lying speech, he lives a truth-speaker, a truth-linker, man of facts who gives reasons, not a deceiver of men."

The Five Principles become a real foundation for a well-ordered society, however little the good of society as a whole may have been in Gautama's mind when he conceived them.

The excellent spiritual thing about this Buddhist teaching was that it urged a man to depend for guidance on his own Inner Vision, which was reckoned to come to him directly from the *Atman* or Great Self.

Immediately after the death of the Buddha five hundred of his chief followers met in council and fixed the orthodox doctrines of the faith and decided which were the sacred writings. This was the first of three such councils. The next was held about one hundred years later when, because of doubts and differences which had arisen, it became necessary again to decide what was orthodox. The third was in 244 B.C. when Asoka, king of Magadha, the greatest of all the champions of Buddhism, called a meeting at Patna again to decide what was orthodox and what not. Asoka himself is a fascinating figure. He has been called "the Emperor Constantine of Buddhism," for it was he who gave it such official prestige and patronage that it became, at least for a time, the religion of India. When Asoka accepted Buddhism, becoming a pacifist, he abandoned his career as military conqueror and devoted his life to the practice of the faith in his kingly affairs, setting up throughout his realm a series of pillars and rock inscriptions praising the teachings of his new faith. His life after his conversion is an eloquent tribute to Buddhism. He inherited a land of war and anarchy ; he left an orderly empire united under a noble faith. He made roads, dug wells, planted trees and established public gardens, created hospitals for both men and animals ; he planted medicinal herbs for his subjects, protected minorities and subject races throughout his empire, and even arranged for the education of women. Also he set about the deliberate spreading of Buddhism, sending missionaries to Persia, to Ceylon, to Kashmir and as far as Alexandria.

The council which he called to establish the tenets of his faith became sharply divided on the question of whether the attainment of Nirvana enriched the personality, the ego, or whether it got rid of it altogether. The majority held the latter view, and they excommunicated the minority. This majority belonged chiefly to Southern India and was called in contempt by the expelled nonconformist of the North, *Hinayana*, the "Little System," while they themselves were *Mahayana*, the "Great System." It is a division which holds in Buddhism to-day. The Hinayana books are written in the Pali language, and this phase of the faith holds in Ceylon; whilst the Mahayana is based largely on a Sanskrit book called the *Lotus Sutra* which upholds the teaching that a perfected Buddhist soul may return to earth to help mankind tread the path. These pure spirits who voluntarily accept reincarnation are called Bodhisattvas, and played a large part in Buddhism when eventually it spread to China. This happened in about the year A.D. 50.

The legend is that the Emperor Ming-ti had a dream bidding him send to the West for evidences of a new faith, and that his emissaries came back with the sacred books of Buddhism. It had an immediate appeal to the Chinese temperament, and soon Buddhist monasteries and temples were established throughout the country despite persecution by the Confucians. With the passing centuries it spread also to Burma, and through the islands of the Malay Archipelago, to Siam to Tibet and far east to Japan and Korea. Strangely it almost died out in India itself, although Ceylon remained a stronghold as it is to-day.

Each of these countries developed a particular kind of Buddhism. In Tibet, especially, it dominated the whole life of the nation under the sacred and secular leadership of the Dalai Lamas, the mystic priest-kings of the country. Cut off from the rest of the world by their geographical remoteness, the Tibetans evolved a church-state governed by the sacred authority of the Lama and revolving around ritualism and monasticism. In China, Buddhism became coloured by the old native religion of Lao-Tze, which in its search for quietude had already established a wide monastic system. The worship of the Bodhisattva of Mercy, *Kwan-yin*, became a marked feature of Chinese Buddhism, while the old paradoxical Taoism refound itself in a curious type of the faith called *Yen*, which ultimately spread to Japan.

and became a cult there. Its basis is a strangely effortless life ; an acceptance of everything of everyday as uniformly sacred.

One fascinating by-product of this expanding faith was a magnificent new wealth of art. Temples and monasteries, the sacred mounds, "stupas," built over the relics of the Buddha, exquisite sculpture, paintings on silk, manuscripts, banners for shrines, frescoes : Buddhism has given us an Eastern art easily comparable to the wonderful Western inheritance we have from Christianity. Early this century archaeologists unearthed one cave on the Turkestan border which contained thousands of silk paintings, illuminated manuscripts and sculptures, so that it was called "The Cave of the Thousand Buddhas." Some of its treasures are in the British Museum. The frescoed caves of Ajanta form another treasure-house of Buddhist art. The enormous ruined temple at Angkor Vat in Indo-China, and the stupa at Borobudor in Java remain as monuments of the greatness of Buddhism in these places a thousand or so years ago.

A stupa is not a temple in our sense of the word, a building into which worshippers go, but a sacred hill with terraces, galleries, flights of steps. That at Borobudor has thousands upon thousands of low-relief carvings of incidents in the life of the Buddha along terraces exemplifying the Eightfold Path, with hundreds of statues of the Buddha himself seated in the traditional Yogi attitude of meditation with crossed legs, poised head and folded hands :

"The likeness of one who knows the boundless joy that lies beyond the senses and swerves not from truth is that of a lamp in a windless place that flickereth not."

That pose, that attitude of the seated Buddha stands with the crucifix of Christianity as the two foremost religious symbols of the world.

The literature of Buddhism is equally remarkable. The original canon was finally fixed at the council called by Asoka, was put into writing about one hundred and fifty years later, that is, in the early part of the first century B.C., and remains approximately the same to-day. It is called the Three Pitakas, or Baskets, and consists of three parts, one for the laity, one for monks and devotees, and a third containing the deeper metaphysical teachings and doctrines. The purest version is that written in the Pali language of the South ; but another, more acceptable to the Mahayana Buddhists, is in Sanskrit.

Beyond this original matter with its traditional teaching of the

Buddha himself there has accumulated a vast literature in poetry and prose. A poem, *Arvagosha*, written about A.D. 50 in Pali contains most of the legends of the life of Buddha, and is approximately the basis for Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, the poem which has made the Buddha and Buddhism known to so many English readers. In that work we see the religion of the Enlightened One at its most ideal, and we realise afresh that, despite the charge of "life negation" made against it, this faith has been one of the supreme factors in the civilisation of human society. We do not judge a religion by the failures of those who claim to be adherents to it, but by its ideal and the effect it has had upon the whole life of mankind.

Said Buddha to his son Rahula, "Dost thou wish to do a deed? Bethink thee, will that deed tend to thy harm, or mine, or that of others? If so, do it not. Will it bring good to thee, to me, to others? If so, do it."

That simple doctrine is the earthly justification of a great faith.



The Wisdom of the Buddha

"Many births have I traversed seeking the builder; in vain weary is the round of births. Now art thou seen, O builder. Never more shalt thou build the house! All thy beams are broken; cast down is thy cornerstone. My mind is set upon Nirvana; it has attained the extinction of desire."

Buddha's first words after his enlightenment.



"Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp; hold fast as a refuge to the truth."

Buddha's last words to his disciples.



"Often do men in terror seek sanctuary in mountains or jungles by sacred groves or trees; in them is no safe sanctuary. But he who goes to the Buddha and to the law of righteousness looks in his wisdom for the four noble truths: sorrow, the cause of sorrow, the cessation of sorrow and the Eightfold Path which leads to the cessation."

"By oneself evil is done, by oneself one suffers ; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another."



"Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good ; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth."



"Wherein does religion consist ? It consists in doing as little harm as possible, in doing good in abundance, in the practice of love, of compassion, of truthfulness and purity, in all the walks of life."



"Wander through the land acting as teachers to this pain-riven world, and wheresoever darkness reigns there kindle the light. Thus go ye forth, filled with compassion, bringing salvation to all."

Buddha's command to his first disciples.



"It is sorrow and the ceasing of sorrow that I proclaim."



"The giving hand, the kindly speech, the life of service, impartiality to one as to another : these be the things that make the world."



"Not even a god could change into defeat the victory of a man over himself."



"Faith is the seed I sow, and good works are the rain which fertilises it ; wisdom and modesty are the parts of the plough and my mind is the guiding rein ; diligence is my draught ox. The harvest that it yields is the ambrosial fruit of Nirvana, and by this ploughing all sorrow ends."



"One act of pure love is greater than spending the whole of one's time in religious offerings to the gods."



"Hurt not others with that which pains yourself."

C R E D O

THE BELIEF OF JAINISM

THIS strange and noble gospel of love and pity for all creatures, although one of the smallest religions of the world in actual numbers, is one of the most spiritual. It is powerful too, in its immediate influence on the goodness of the lives of its believers.

Founded in Northern India in the sixth century B.C. by Mahavira it teaches that every living thing has a soul which persists after death through numberless incarnations, and therefore must be deeply respected. All life is sacred, and non-injury to every living being is therefore the highest religion. Jainism accepts no creator of the universe, believing this to be a mystery beyond human understanding. Reverence is done to the Jains, an order of twenty-four super-spirits. Teachers of whom Mahavira was the last; but a further series of twenty-four is yet to come.

Every creature has three bodies of which one is left behind at death whilst the others go forward with the soul on its journey towards ultimate purity which can only be attained from the human stage. This attainment demands first the good life of liberality, gentleness, a continence, and eventually the conquest of all the passions of the body. Mingled with this practical goodness are many esoteric beliefs of the nature of the universe, of matter, of the five degrees of sentient life, only the lowest of which may be used as food, and other fundamental

LIBERATION THROUGH KINDNESS

*The Story of
Jainism*

ALONG with Hinduism itself and Buddhism, one other religion of India deserves special attention. Jainism is allied to both of the greater faiths, and is sometimes considered simply as a heretical sect of one or the other ; but its beliefs are so different, its rules of conduct so individual, that it has in justice to be treated as a separate religion. Like Buddhism it came into being originally as an attempt to purify Brahminism ; and like Buddhism its founder by long meditation on the spiritual things discovered truths which enabled him to build better than he knew.

That founder, Vardhamana, was a contemporary of Gautama, being born in the year 599 B.C. He, too, was the son of a princely family which ruled over a part of Magadha in Northern India. He lived in the palace as a prince until he was nearly thirty years of age, and then, his parents having died and his elder brother having succeeded to the throne of the little principality, Vardhamana asked that he might be released from his duties to the state and go away to lead the life of an ascetic. One has to remember that in that sixth century B.C. there was a great spiritual ferment in men's minds ; and in India especially, inspired by the teachings of the sacred Vedas, men with some deep enthusiasm for religion sought to fulfil their destiny by thus going apart for meditation upon spiritual things. Unlike Gautama, this young man had no ties of wife or child.

For twelve years he lived thus in spiritual thought and exercises. After the first year he went naked, "clothed with the sky," as many pious Jains still do, and as his statues depict him. By all this discipline of mind and body Vardhamana obtained the wisdom he had sought.

There is no legend of sudden enlightenment like that of the Buddha, but the way of life which Vardhamana found, the conception of the universe which he had, have remained the inspiration of his followers ever since. For thirty years he travelled about, teaching others and organising the monasteries of the new faith for men who

wished to live a life of asceticism after his model ; and when he died in 527 B.C. he was called *Mahavira*, "the great hero," and *Jina*, "the victor." To-day in the magnificent Jainist temples, such as that Mount Abu, he is worshipped as divine, and the times of his birth in the spring and of his passing in November are celebrated as festivals.

This gospel of Mahavira's is, before all else, a gospel of kindness. Men and animals share in a universal care and consideration.

"The essence of the conduct of the Knower is that he does not injure anything"—that is the fundamental of Jainist conduct. We in the West might consider that it is carried to absurd lengths, for the strict Jainist wears a gauze over his mouth when at prayer and will not eat after dusk lest any minute form of life be swallowed inadvertently; nor will he sit on any seat without brushing it. Jainists are absolute vegetarians, with a diet of what they call "one-sensed life" that is, nuts, fruit, vegetables, milk and clarified butter. In the concern for animals they established hospitals for sick creatures centuries ago.

From the beginning Mahavira did not recognise caste, that great curse of Hinduism, and preached against the sacerdotalism of the Brahmins. In theory the Jainists recognise for worship only a group of twenty-four enlightened ones of the far past, of whom Mahavira was the last. Some time in the future there are to be twenty-four more. Actually there is a tendency to accept again the foremothers Hindu gods—Brahma, Siva and Vishnu—and to enshrine them along with their own Jinas. Until recently one branch of the religion followed Mahavira's example in going naked, and these were called *Digambaras*, or "clothed with the sky"; now, except the most strict, they wear clothes save at meal-times. The other branch also called *Svetambaras*, "clothed in white," and like Gandhi, who was brought up a Jainist, wear the simplest white garments.

The Jainists have a complicated idea of the structure of the universe quite different from that of any other people. They do not believe that it was the work of a creator, and, indeed, do not believe that it had a beginning nor that it will ever end. They measure time from the present backwards and forwards in such matters. They also have a fascinating doctrine of the degrees of life which things possess,—one-sensed, two-sensed, etc.—and upon this is based their taboo upon the taking of all kinds of higher sentient life.

All embodied beings, they assert, have really three bodies, two of which go forward with the soul at death, leaving behind the most grossly material. These two, subtly blended with the soul, condition the new incarnation. Thus the soul reaches the human plane and then, through many lives of spiritual effort and goodness, becomes a pure soul with no further need of bodily life and earthly experience. To the Jains, however, the soul has always a separate existence ; it is not lost in Nirvana, but lives its own individual life freed from matter.

All this metaphysical belief lies behind Jainist ethics. These arise as they ask : How shall a man gain this purity and knowledge which make him a Jain ? The word means "to conquer," and first of all he must conquer his passions of anger, pride, deceit and greed, which are the four major passions, and of worry, fear, disgust and sex, which are the four minor ones. Then, as we have seen, there is the supreme task of kindness and non-injury. "*Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah*," that phrase is the keynote of the faith, and means that non-injury to living beings is the highest religion. The greatest gift the good man can make is the gift of safety to all forms of life around him.

So in this ancient faith lies a dynamic power of love and kindness which is sufficient alone to create the good life. And in a world torn by the four major passions recognised by Jainism and wasted miserably by the four minor ones we may fitly pay tribute to the ideals of this religion of Mahavira the Conqueror.



The Wisdom of Jainism

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own selves, and should therefore refrain from inflicting upon others such injury as would appear undesirable to us if inflicted upon ourselves."



"Difficult to conquer is oneself, but when that is conquered everything is conquered."



"In this world living beings suffer for their deeds ; for the things they themselves have done they obtain punishment, and they will not get over it until they have felt that punishment."

CREDO

SHINTOISM

THE beliefs of Shinto, “The Way of the Gods” divide between a vast mythology belonging to the remote legend past of Japan, and a strong nationalism which logically arises from these early stories. The link lies in the assumption of divinity of the Emperor, for somewhere in the confused mythology Sun-Goddess created the first divine ruler of the islands, and the conferred divinity upon him and all his successors.

With this belief goes the worship of ancestors, of household gods and of gods of every locality: an almost unending system of enshrining divinity making for charming ceremonial. Of recent years this whole system, with its implication of absolute obedience to elders, unquestioning devotion to the Emperor and the State has been exploited politically in the form of State Shinto. Now the renunciation of all claim to divinity by the Emperor Hirohito himself, and the defeat of Japan in the world-war, must inevitably modify the dangerous aspects of the faith.

In the matter of conduct, the foremost virtue—along with obedience is purity, symbolised and catered for by a system of ceremonial wash and bathing. The saints of the faith have always seen this as outward manifestation of that purity of mind and spirit which expresses itself in truth and mutual kindness.

SHINTOISM: FAITH OF A NATION

The Story of Shintoism

STRANGEST, perhaps, of all the existing great faiths of the modern world is Shintoism, the national religion of Japan. Like Japan itself it is full of curious contrasts, a mixture of primitive magic belonging to the Bronze Age and the violent nationalism of our own day. That a contemporary people with the passion for enlightenment of the modern Japanese can still accept the complicated mythology which is the basis of this faith is one of the least comprehensible marvels of the human mind. That mythology was gathered into two enormous books at the beginning of the eighth century A.D. by the sacred writer Yasumaro. One was the *Kojiki*, or Record of Ancient Matters ; the other the *Nihongi*, or Chronicles of Japan, a work with which Prince Toneri is said to have collaborated with Yasumaro. Both were written under Chinese influences, but were the collection of the legends peculiar to Japan, telling of the marvellous doings of the ancient gods, and of the birth of their innumerable children all of whom were gods in their turn as well as being islands, trees, mountains, rivers, flowers, rocks or heroes. That these originated from "the august hat" or "the august trousers" of the original gods does not detract at all from their divinity, nor prevent reverence at their shrines.

The paradox of all this may be resolved by seeing it, on the one hand, as a surviving primitive religion which, because of the segregation of Japan from the main stream of evolution until a comparatively few years ago, has remained almost unaltered ; and, on the other, as a deliberately fostered intensification of national loyalty calculated to weld the country in absolute unity. Shintoism is not the only faith which is at once a religion and a political policy. In this instance it is particularly useful in that the Emperor is held to be the direct descendant of the greatest of Japanese divinities, Amaterasu-Omikami, the Sun Goddess. He is therefore himself divine, and his rule is

absolute. Loyalty to the Emperor as the Son of Heaven is thereby the first tenet in the Shinto creed, and for it the Japanese will give their lives without question or doubt.

Shintoism must thus be seen in its two aspects. One is as a surviving nature worship with a vast ritual encouraged by the priests and servers at the fifty thousand shrines. The other is as a national faith, State Shinto, which is taught in the schools and which has reverence for the Emperor and the service of the country as its chief ethic.

“The Luxuriant Land of Reed Plains is a country which our descendants are to inherit. Go, therefore, our Imperial Grandson, and rule over it ! And may our Imperial lineage continue unbroken and prosperous, co-eternal with Heaven and Earth.”

Thus, according to the *Kojiki*, spake the Sun Goddess to her grandson the first Emperor ; and her blessing still is assumed to rest upon his present-day successor. Many of the religions of the Bronze Age, such as that of Ancient Greece or of the Jews, strike this same note, giving the blessing of a tribal god to the possession of a particular land.

Shintoism as the embodiment of early nature worship, ancestor worship, defence against demons and evil spirits comes more nearly to a pure religion. In common with many such religions it has its baser and its nobler aspects as it is practised by ill-educated, superstitious people or by men and women truly seeking some path of good living. In its lowest aspect it is given to charms and all the usual abuses of a professional priesthood working on the fear of the unseen forces. In its higher it lays stress upon sincerity, self-sacrifice, purity and cleanliness of body and mind. This purity, symbolised by the bathing of the body, is itself a symbol of absolute goodness.

“To do good is to be pure ; to commit evil is to be impure. The deities abhor evil deeds because they are impure.”

So says the *Shinto Gobusho*, the sacred Commandments of the faith, whilst a later Shinto writing declares :

“What is ablution ? It is not solely the cleansing of one's body with lustral water, it means one's following the right and moral way. Pollution means moral evil and vice. Though a man wash off his bodily filth, he will yet fail to please the deity if he restrains not his evil desires.”

Under the urge of this symbolistic purity the Japanese are exception-

ally given to the bathing of the body, and notoriously regard all the white races, and indeed all other peoples, as disgustingly unclean.

The other great virtue taught by Shintoism is that of sincerity.

"If a man is sincere in mind he is sure to succeed in realising a communion with the divine. This is no other than inner purity or sincerity which means purity of heart."

It is repeatedly urged in the Shintoist writings and teachings that worship at the shrines, especially at the most sacred of all, the Ise-Shrine of the Ancestral Sun Goddess, is only effective if it is made by those who are sincere, upright and pure of heart.

At its best Shinto tends to become monotheistic in the worship of the Sun Goddess, who is regarded as being supreme over all other gods and goddesses. Actually the highest conception of Deity transcends even this of the Sun Goddess and passes on to some ethereal essence of spirit beyond her.

Thus the scholarly and spiritually minded Shintoist asserts that human words and human conceptions are entirely inadequate to speak of or even to formulate the absolute Deity which governs all things. Nevertheless although that Deity is so utterly incomprehensible it can be felt by the sensitive soul everywhere and in everything.

This is a mysticism which joins hands with the highest thought of Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and the most noble religions of the world ; and in viewing any faith we must needs see it at its highest.

Like Hinduism, however, it unites with this nobility of thought and practice of fine minds and spirits an enormous mass of superstition which is little removed from the most primitive animism and demon worship. Thus, although the Sun Goddess is avowedly the supreme Deity the divine drama revealed in the *Kojiki* introduced hundreds of other deities which rapidly became thousands and even millions. The drama itself was first played, according to the *Kojiki* record, on the Plain of High Heaven, and the three most important divine actors were the Sun Goddess, the Rain God, her brother (who is also the Rice God), and the Moon God. It is easy to see that this is a legend based on ancient fertility rites such as we find everywhere in the primitive world, created as man realised that from the coming together of sun and rain resulted the blessed springing of crops which ensured life.

In the Japanese mythology it became most confused and complicated, and we need not attempt to unravel the story. To our modern Western minds it has elements of the comic, as when the Sun Goddess and the Rain God walk round and round a pillar as a means of begetting children, but none come because the Goddess spoke during the proceeding ; so they parade again, and this time, as the Goddess remains silent, five male and three female children miraculously result. Later the grandson of this strange union, Ninigo-no-Mikoto, descends from heaven to earth, alights on the mountain peak of Takachiho, and the whole land of Japan is given for him and his descendants to rule for ever. The Emperor is a direct descendant of this Ninigo-no-Mikoto, and for that reason he is served with a loyalty which never questions, and which has in it a mystical devotion unparalleled in the West.

Divinity under Shinto, however, is common enough. At last almost everything and every person of importance has a shrine. Shrines are erected to ancestors and become the centre of delightful ritual ; shrines are erected to heroes and notables and saints ; shrines attracting thousands upon thousands of pilgrims are erected to the greater gods such as that at Ise to the supreme Sun Goddess. The dead hover around as ghosts, inhabiting a world of darkness but greatly influencing the lives of the living, and therefore demanding propitiation. Many demons haunt the villages and have to be bought off with gifts made through (or perhaps to) the priests or shrine attendants. A definite government department has control of the many thousands of shrines thus established. Out of this prolific polytheism comes a religion at once picturesque and extremely naïve, with charming festivals and all manner of local rituals.

We must not forget, however, that this unsophisticated basis supports a real morality in which the individual conscience is the guide to good conduct, being regarded as the divine part of every man and woman. This is very close to George Fox's "That of God in every man" which, as Dean Inge has recently pointed out, is the highest and most exacting conception mankind has yet had of the nature of morality. This authority of the individual conscience is inherent in Shinto, which holds that men are naturally virtuous and naturally know right from wrong.

"The Deity, though unseen, is ever ready to respond to

prayer from a truthful heart, and the divine grace is assuredly bestowed on a virtuous man."

That Shintoist doctrine is as high-minded as any we find in other faiths. It has to be set against the ugly deeds committed in the name of State Shinto, as the loving-kindness of St. Francis has to be set against the zeal which lit the fires of the Inquisition.

In its highest forms, too, Shinto sees some absolute Deity above all its gods, even above the powerful Sun Goddess.

"The Deity is absolute. It transcends human words which are of a relative nature. It is incomprehensible, and yet it permeates all things and is everywhere."

So wrote one of the eighteenth-century sages of Japan, and again we are forced to recognise the nobility of the conception.

So we find this strange religion touching the heights and the depths. On the one hand, ignorant peasants tearing tiny scraps of coloured paper as propitiatory offerings at the village shrines to ward off demons, or Japanese soldiers committing terrible atrocities in defence of their sacred soil and loyalty to their sacred Emperor ; on the other, great mystics living lives of purity, sincerity and contemplation, and finding, indeed, the Shinto or Kaminomichi, the Way of the Gods.



The Wisdom of Shinto

"All ye under the heavens ! regard heaven as your father, earth as your mother, and all things as your brothers and sisters. You will then enjoy this divine country, free from hate and sorrow."



"Action sincere, by noble-minded man, reflects the very Self of the Unseen."



"Our eyes may see some uncleanness, but let not our minds see things which are not clean. Our ears may hear some uncleanness, but let not our minds hear things that are not clean."



"With the unseen God who seeth all secret things in the silence, communes from the earth below, the heart of the man sincere."

CREDO

THE BELIEFS OF ISLAM

THERE is no God but God; and Muhammad is His Prophet." This fanatical monotheism, challenging the all-too-human tendency to the open or veiled worship of many gods, was the basis of the passionate creed of Muhammad as he blazed it across the world at the end of the seventh century of our era. The belief in the one God was everything, although it carried with it the rules of good living which the Prophet promulgated: sobriety, trustworthiness in one's dealings, generosity in alms-giving, fastings and prayers at appointed seasons. It permitted a limited polygamy, and, indeed, had little respect for women in its philosophy. The main business of the true Believer was surrender to God in his personal life and a spreading of the religion, by force if necessary.

The rewards and punishments of the world to come, a world given over to the government of God and His angels, were definite; a sensual garden paradise for the Faithful, particularly for those who died fighting in the establishment of the Muhammadan cause; an equally physical Hell for the Unbeliever and especially for any who dared recant the Faith. All this doctrine, preached verbally by the Prophet himself, was gathered into the sacred writing, the Koran, very soon after his death, and remains still the absolute creed of the more than two hundred millions of adherents of the religion to-day.

GREAT IS ALLAH, THE ONE GOD

The Story of Muhammadanism

NEXT to Christianity, Islam is the most dynamic religion in the modern world. To-day about three hundred millions of the most virile people of the East and of Northern Africa live in that faith, and in its historic past this revelation to an obscure Arab tribesman altered human history as few other single events have done. Muhammad stands with Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar and Napoleon as a world conqueror ; and he stands, as he himself claimed, in the line of the great Hebrew prophets as a revealer of God. Long after his death Christendom was still fighting the Crusades against his followers, and so history continued to be moulded out of that struggle of rival powers and ideologies. More important still, the sweeping tides of victory which centuries before the Crusades had established Islam as one vast religious system from India to the Pyrenees, established also a system of scientific learning which did as much as anything else to re-establish human knowledge after the dark ages. Wonderful advances in mathematics, medicine, physics and other branches of learning were a by-product of this religion. Islam is, indeed, a faith which moved the world.

Its birthplace was Arabia among the Semite people whose genius for religion gave us Judaism and Christianity. In fact, it is possible to regard Muhammad's teaching as a strange and individual development of the old Jewish religion, or even as a wayward Christian sect. The Prophet regarded himself as one of the long tradition of Semite inspired teachers with Noah and Jesus of Nazareth. He denied divinity to Jesus, but so did many Christian sects of the time : versions of Christian doctrine with which he would have come into contact when he drove his caravans into Syria. He saw in Jesus the proclaimer of the One God, Whom he himself proclaimed ; and his followers turned their faces in prayer towards Jerusalem for many years before they turned towards Mecca. If he denounced the Christians it was as a people who had strayed so far from the monotheistic teaching

of their Master as to worship three gods : the Father, the Son and Mary. If he denounced the Jews it was as the Prophet of their God to whom they would not listen. He was emphatic concerning his own absolute humanity, called himself always the Servant, and knew his human weaknesses even though he indulged them and went so far as to claim Heaven's express permission for their indulgence.

A strange person Muhammad, born in Mecca about A.D. 570, of a branch of the tribe of the Quraish which ruled that city : a strange inspired person, full of contradictions of character, but worthy to be placed among the heroes of the human race as Carlyle placed him.

Until he was nearly forty Muhammad's life was that of an ordinary man of his people. He was brought up by an uncle after the death of his father, and from the age of twelve is said to have accompanied his guardian on trading journeys into Syria where he would have been brought into contact with the Jews and with various Christian sects. Becoming himself a leader of caravans on behalf of a wealthy widow, Khadijah, he fell in love with her and married her. Then, in middle age he began to reveal that passion for religion which was not unfamiliar among his people. He became a "Hanif"—an ascetic—wandering the deserts, ragged, dishevelled, living in caves and meditating on the things of the spirit. In the lone spaces of the Arabian desert, under the unbroken vastness of the star-bright night sky, God felt very near to such men as Muhammad. He was physically subject to catalepsy, and one night in a trance condition he saw the great eyes of the Archangel Gabriel and heard a voice which bade him "Recite!" In a vision before his eyes was written in fiery letters on a cloth the majestic words of the first *sura*, or verse, of what years afterwards came to be the *Koran*:

"Recite thou !
For thy Lord is the most beneficent,
Who hath taught thee the use of the pen,
Hath taught Man that which he knoweth not."

That night of *El Qadr*, as the Muhammadans call it, a great new faith was born into the world.

Muhammad fled in terror from that glimpse of the spiritual world, and found peace in Khadijah's arms, but destiny had laid her finger too heavily upon him. Again in the wilderness the vision came ;

again a mystic message was given ; and though Khadijah wrapped him in his cloak to hide him and break the spell, the command came through :

“ O thou, enwrapped in thy mantle !
Arise and warn !
The Lord, magnify Him !
Thy raiment, purify it !
The abomination, flee it ! ”

What was this thing that had so assuredly to be proclaimed ? It was contained in two words : one was *Allah*, the One God ; the other was *Islam*, submit. It was no easy message. Submit was not an acceptable word to the proudest race on earth, nor One God understandable to people who worshipped a thousand. Mecca had been founded upon idolatry. There, imbedded in the wall of the vast shrine beside the well, where according to tradition Hagar and Ishmael had found rest, was the sacred black stone, the *Kaaba*. That *Kaaba* was the heart of Mecca, and so the heart of the Arab world, since for its sake Mecca was the chief place of pilgrimage. All the prosperity of the city, all the traditions of the people, were focused upon it. Muhammad's own tribe, the Quraish, were its guardians. His own destiny had been strangely touched by it, for once when floods had dislodged it and no man dared to replace it, the man to restore it had been chosen by lot, and the hazard had fallen to him. It was no easy thing, therefore, for Muhammad to rise and say :

“ They who join gods with God are unclean.”

But Muhammad dared. As Carlyle wrote of him :

“ Every new opinion at its starting is in a minority of one. In one man's head there it dwelt as yet. One man alone of the whole world believes it ; there is one man against all men.”

Khadijah believed ; but perhaps in the arms of this fiery and eloquent husband of hers she believed too easily. Zaid, his slave, believed ; but who would not take the word of such a master ? In three years he had only thirteen converts. There were times of absolute despair. Months of lonely meditation in the wilderness when no voice broke the silence, no vision lightened the darkness of the night sky or shadowed the endless burning sands. Then the

evelations would come again ; the great throbbing *suras* which were to be the *Koran* urged him anew.

“ Recite !

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.”

Once he called his own kinsfolk together, forty of them, and bade them believe. Abu Thaleb, the uncle who had been his foster father, an old man now but loving still this wayward son of the tribe, begged him to leave this dangerous matter alone.

“ If the sun stood at my right hand and the moon at my left, and bade me hold my peace, I could not obey,” cried the tortured creature, torn between his love for the old man and his faith in the new truth ; and with that he wept scaldingly as only a proud man can, until through his tears he saw sixteen-year-old Ali, Abu Thaleb’s youngest son, at his side : a new passionate adherent to the faith. Ali was destined to become Muhammad’s adopted son, to marry his daughter, to be a Galahad of the faith and to die a martyr for it.

From that time the new religion grew dangerously. It menaced the established order, the pilgrimages, the traditions, the prosperity of Mecca. The persecutions began, and like all persecutions in the history of the world they cleansed and welded as by fire, till the thing left was strong, trustworthy, true to itself.

“ The unbelievers conspired against thee to hold thee, to slay thee ; but God conspired also, and the best conspirator is God.”

Once the adherents fled to Abyssinia where it was thought that a Christian community might welcome them. But Muhammad was an Arab of the Arabs, and his hope was centred in his native land, and in his native city of Mecca. He even tried to compromise with Meccan idolatry on one occasion, but immediately the voice of his inspiration came rebukingly to him, and, brave creature that he was, he immediately went to the shrine and in fiery words recanted his ipse and preached again :

“ Your God is one God ;

There is no God but He, the Merciful, the Compassionate.”

The persecutions broke out anew, drove the faith underground, but still the disciples met secretly in caves in the near-by desert. And still it spread, for like Christianity before it, Islam preached a vast spiritual democracy, a brotherhood of the faithful which made slave

and master one in the eyes of God, which promised the joys of paradise to even the most downtrodden.

When Muhammad was fifty, Khadijah, his good angel, died ; and with her death something hardened in the heart of the Prophet. The *suras* of his revelation no longer plead ; they threaten. He turned from Mecca and, still led by the voice, fled with his followers to Medina, this time hoping for toleration from the powerful and wealthy Jewish community there. It was an epoch-making event ; and, indeed, as we date our calendar from the birth of Christ, the whole Muhammadan world dates its time from the year of *Ad Hejira*—the Flight : A.D. 622 ; A.H. I.

Medina also failed them. If the Jews tolerated the refugees, they also exploited them, and only poverty faced this proud people. Near by, along the pilgrim route to Mecca, the rich caravans passed on their way to the hated shrine of the false gods. The exiled faithful were Bedouins and warriors as well as Islamites ; Muhammad himself was a statesman and a leader as well as a prophet. So Islam turned to the sword. “Submit !”—not only to God, but to his Prophet.

The raids on the caravans began. It was the old pattern of tribal life made rich and terrible with a new spiritual motive. The Meccans brought trained forces against the raiders, and at Bedr in A.H. 2, Muhammad won his first great victory. The resounding *sura* of The Spoils celebrates it :

“ O ye who believe,
When ye meet the marshalled hosts of the infidel
Turn not your backs to them.”

With that battle at Bedr the challenge was clear. A coalition of Meccans, Jews and Christians besieged Medina unavailingly. Muhammad promised to all who fell in battle the joys of paradise ; to all who faltered, hell. In his new power he turned upon the Jews of Medina, slaughtered them and took their riches for the faith. He himself was always simple in his living, but he was realist enough to know the value of this rich loot to his army. Now that Khadijah was dead he took new wives, following the polygamy of his people. There was Ayesha, whom he loved for her beauty, but to whom, when she asked, “Am I not more beautiful than Khadijah ?” he replied, “Khadijah believed in me when none other did.”

There were others ; some of them rather shameful incidents, as when he took the wife of Zaid, his own adopted son.

" No blame attacheth to a prophet when God hath given him a permission," the voice obligingly told him. It was a dangerous doctrine, one which had served his purpose since first he had broken faith with Arab tradition by leading raids on the caravans during the sacred months of the truce which from time immemorial had been observed. It came to justify everything, as Islam put the world to the sword. Believe, or die. Even more dangerously : believe and pay tribute, or die. Gradually the *suras* of his revelation change from the voice of the mystic to that of the warrior-administrator with a vision of a united Arabia dominating the known world.

At first the campaign was only against his avowed enemies. There came a day when he sent a demand to a remote Jewish community at Khaibar—a people who had done him no harm, had indeed had no contact with the new faith. He besieged it, and though the Jews defended themselves bravely he took it, but left them in possession in return for tribute of half their possessions and half their future produce. That was a new step, a move towards world conquest. There were ugly phases even of this aggression : butchery of whole communities, selling into slavery, the taking of women, torture. At Khaibar itself the widow of a man whom Muhammad had caused to be terribly killed was forcibly made his newest bride.

Then he turned upon Mecca ; and the Meccans, realising that he was invincible, accepted him. The shrine of the *Kaaba* became a mosque. The idols were destroyed, and after the manner of the new faith, from its tower the faithful were called to prayer. Mecca became again a holy city, and five times daily the pious Muhammadan turned towards it in prayer as hitherto he had turned towards Jerusalem.

The Prophet's vision was attained : his native Mecca had become the centre of the whole Arabian world, with one religion, one God, one government and one overlord. Two years later Muhammad died. Legend has it that just before he died he went to the mosque and asked if he had wronged any man or owed any man, and when one man claimed three drachms he ordered them to be paid.

A strange and wonderful man, he fiercely disclaimed divinity,

knowing only one thing, the urgency of his inspired mission. He found Arabia a land of primitive idolatry, tribal strife, and fear of the powerful neighbouring peoples. He left it united, vital, and in possession of a great faith. He brought into the world the most powerful monotheistic religion, and at his death, as in his life, it had two aspects—one, the extension of its spiritual beliefs ; the other, the broadening of its power as a political unit in the world. The first concentrated upon the gathering together of the Prophet's words and teachings "from date leaves and tablets of white stone and from the breasts of men" into the *Koran*, *The Reading*. The second, under the Caliphs or Successors of Muhammad, continued along the path of conquest which he had opened. Thus, with all Arabia united in this dynamic faith, the proselytising sword flashed wider. The King of Abyssinia, the Governor of Egypt, Chosroes the King of Persia, received letters demanding that their people should accept Islam. Refusal brought down the hosts of the all-conquering Moslems.

Within two centuries all the Middle East, right out to the Punjab in Northern India, the whole of Northern Africa and Spain, were conquered. A new unity had come into the world comparable to the Roman Empire. Stretching farther east it contacted the culture of China and brought it into touch with that of Europe. Delhi, Fostat, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Cordova : from India to the Pyrenees noble centres of learning sprang into being, for these Moslems were an inquiring people, and the stability which they brought enabled mankind to have leisure for scientific inquiry. Not the least of their gifts to the world was that of their system of numerals which supplanted the clumsy Roman method. Indeed, they had some genius for mathematics, and it is not without significance that algebra is an Arabic word. Astronomy, alchemy which was the beginning of physics, medicine : the new advances of science came inevitably as thinkers and experimenters gathered together in what were in reality, if not in name, universities. We hear of that fascinating woman dramatist of the ninth century, Hroswitha the Nun of Geldersheim, travelling from her convent in Saxony to the colleges at Cordova to sit at the feet of the Islamic and Jewish teachers there. After the first tussles, Moslem and Jew, both believing strongly in one God, both Semites, settled down into a marvellous reciprocity of learning.

Meantime, Islam had established its fundamental unity by gathering together all the teachings of Muhammad into the *Koran*. This was done almost immediately after the death of the Prophet so that his spiritual dictatorship was preserved. Zaid Ibn Thabit, his scribe, was entrusted with the task by the first Caliph and completed it under the second, writing a scroll which was given into the charge of Muhammad's widow, Haphsa. The third Caliph, finding that differing versions of the *Koran* were coming into being, and recognising the need of absolute unity in the Moslem world, ordered Zaid again to make one authoritative version, and with characteristic zeal had all other copies burnt and destroyed. So the *Koran* came, in substance if not in order, as Muhammad had spoken it. It made Islam a book religion, and ensured unity of belief.

On the other hand, dissension arose out of the problem of the Caliphate, the succession of the Prophet's office as secular head of the growing empire. The question whether the first four Caliphs were true successors, or whether the first rightful successor was Ali, the cousin of the Prophet, divided the Moslem world into two. The Sunnites, who hold the former view, are the most numerous, and they accept certain traditional books of sayings and doings of Muhammad as well as the *Koran*. The Shiites, holding the other theory, constitute the majority of the Moslems in India and Persia. From time to time there have been movements for the reformation of Islam or for some extension of the original doctrines, but save for this early schism it has remained a simple and united faith, serving the spiritual needs of hundreds of millions of people through twelve centuries.

Its actual beliefs are few and definite. First comes all that is implied in the traditional formula : "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet." God is the absolute Creator and Ruler of the Universe, omniscient and omnipotent. Around Him are the angels, sexless beings, who also attend upon true believers to record their actions. A sensual paradise awards the believer after death, while hell yawns for the infidel, their fates being decided at the Day of Judgment. Adam, Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jacob, Joseph and Job are accepted as prophets preceding Muhammad, and Jesus is accepted as the Servant of God, but expressly not as divine.

On this foundation of supernatural belief is built an exact if simple

code of ritual and an equally definite code of daily conduct. It is perhaps the very sureness of Islam on these matters which have given it an attraction to simple men. The ritual consists of prayer five times daily with the worshipper turned towards Mecca. For this purpose the mosques were built, some of which are vast buildings with exquisite domes and slender minaret towers, from the upper gallery of which a crier calls the faithful to prayer. In the direction of Mecca every mosque has a niche called the Kiblah, and the worshippers turn towards this during the service. Images are forbidden (a link with Jewish belief), and texts from the *Koran* in the beautiful Arab script of the interwoven linear design known as arabesque decorate Islamic buildings, often in the form of ceramic tiles. Ritual consists chiefly of prayers and the recital of the *Koran*, although on Friday—which is the Muhammadan Sabbath—a sermon is preached.

One other aspect of the ritual is the observance of the Fast of Ramadan in the ninth month of every year, when no food may be eaten from sunrise to sunset from one new moon until the next. Another, not so obligatory but nevertheless important, is pilgrimage to Mecca where the Sacred Mosque is deeply venerated; and the *Kaaba* still has its place as the object of utmost sanctity to the pilgrims, the "right hand of God on earth." So ancient idolatry maintains its foothold in the very faith which came to overthrow it. The other highly Sacred Mosque is that at Medina where the Prophet is buried.

Ceremonial washing before meals and before prayers is an accepted part of Muhammadan practice; with *Ghoul*, the washing of the whole body for special purification. Almsgiving is a further obligation upon the true believer, and beyond that which comes from private charity there is a legal tax upon the property of all Moslems.

In the establishment of a code of ethics Islam may best be regarded as ancient Judaism modified by the customs of Arabia. The forbidding of the eating of swine's flesh and other tabooed meats, of the drinking of wine, of gambling, murder, theft, adultery and unchastity, are the heritage of the Pentateuch, with obedience to parents and the forbidding of the making of images. Along with this go the Arab rules of marriage permitting the limited polygamy of four wives and a system of legal concubinage. Marriage is indeed a duty to the Muhammadan. The position of women, their subjection to

men, the unfair laws on marriage and divorce, their segregation and veiling are among the least worthy features of the code of Islam. Slavery, too, is permitted, although the absolute spiritual democracy upon which the faith is based, like that of Christianity, mitigates the evil of economic domination. In both instances it was probably this new note of spiritual equality in the eyes of God which made for the initial success of the new religions.

Islam suffers from its own virtue of definiteness. It inevitably tends to be a rigid thing, and it is amazing that it has held such sway in the swiftly changing world. Now and again there have been expansions of it, the noblest of which is Sufism which, as early as the ninth and tenth centuries, carried the Islamic faith into paths of mysticism and quietism, and in Persia developed into a magnificent poetry of the spirit. Sufism was, perhaps, the first theosophy, finding in many religions the essential common denominator of God and His righteousness. Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and even Hinduism, as well as Platonic philosophy, contributed to this most poetic of faiths. But Islam itself, for all its rigidity and a certain sterility, suffices for millions upon millions of human beings generation after generation as a way to God and an urge to the good life ; and the story of humanity would have been different had Muhammad not given his life to the preaching of the One God.



The Wisdom of Islam

“Blessed is he who gives away his substance that he may become pure, and who offers not favours to any one for the sake of recompense. Be kind to kindred and servants, the orphans and the poor. Speak righteously to all men and give alms.”



“Your exhorting mankind to virtuous deeds is alms ; your showing men the road when they lose it is alms ; and your assisting the blind is alms ; and your removing stones and thorns which are inconvenient to man is alms ; and your pouring water from your bucket into that of your brother is alms to you.”



“Alms fall first into God’s hands before reaching the hands of the poor.”

“ Be ye glad then in the covenant which ye have made with him, for that is the mighty happiness. Those who repent, those who worship, those who praise, those who fast, those who bow down, those who bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who keep the bounds of God.”



“ God’s is the East and the West, and wherever ye turn there is God’s face.”



“ He who discourses of eternity must have within him the lamp of eternity.”



“ Repel evil with what is better, and lo, he between whom and thee there is enmity will be as if he were a warm friend.”



“ Say not : if people do good to us we will do good to them, but if people oppress us, we will oppress them. But resolve that if people do good to you ye will do good to them, and if they oppress you oppress them not again.”



“ The law of life requires : sincerity to God, severity to self, justice to all people, service to elders. Kindness to the young, generosity to the poor, good counsel to friends, forbearance with enemies.”



“ Religion is the divinity within us reaching up to the divinity above.”

CREDO

THE BELIEFS OF CHRISTIANITY

GOD, the Creator of the universe, revealing His own nature and His Laws gradually to mankind through the Hebrew prophets finally came Himself to earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and completed the divine revelation by His teaching of universal love and brotherhood. In the sacred mystery of the Trinity His nature was that of the Father-Creator, the Son who came to earth, and the Holy Spirit who remains among men since Jesus Christ suffered death by crucifixion, triumphed over it by His resurrection and ascended into heaven. To this Trinity the Roman Catholic Church add Mary, the Virgin Mother, object of the deep veneration of Christians throughout the centuries.

After the death of Jesus the Church, first through the Apostles, and particularly through St. Paul, then through the Saints and Fathers, continued the teaching of the message, gradually establishing the most dynamic religion in the world. It gathered the teaching primarily into the sacred books of the New Testament, accepting the Jewish sacred books as the prophetic prelude to Christ's coming, and so created its Bible.

The most important aspect of the Christian religion is its insistence upon the Father relationship of God to every individual soul, and logically therefore the brotherhood of men to each other. This, allied to its doctrine of love, yields a morality of universal mutual kindness and helpfulness, and is capable of continual expansion and expression in our social affairs; our customs and laws gradually becoming more and more Christian.

On the mystical side, the immortality of every soul and its continuance after death in a heaven of spiritual communion with God seems to have been promised by Jesus to the righteous. Hell for the wicked, thought to be inconsistent with the idea of God's love by modern thought, is nevertheless retained by many branches of the Church, whilst the Roman Catholics believe also in Purgatory where the sins of the world can be atoned for.

CHRISTIANITY : GOD AS LOVE

The Story of Christianity

THE story of Christianity is the story of mankind's latest experiment in civilisation. It is so interwoven with the stuff of human history during nearly two thousand years that there is scarcely a single event of importance which has not been in some way influenced by it. The evolving Christian beliefs ruled supreme in the world of thought for more than a thousand years, and even after that period of absolute domination they modified every system of philosophy. The Christian Church absolutely dominated all political and social life for a similar period, and again profoundly influenced when it ceased entirely to control. Art was kept alive and grew to its most magnificent expression under Christendom ; science was reborn within the precincts of the Church though she guarded her nest against this unwieldy fledgling ; humanitarian institutions such as hospitals and, indeed, every kind of relief to the sick, the poor, the captive, the lunatic, were its creation. Even when the direct power of Christianity and the Church waned, the new humanism was really Christianity without its supernaturalism. Thus Christianity has been, and still is, the most powerful force in the world.

To attempt to deal in a few pages with this thing upon which more books have been written than upon anything else in the history of mankind, is to essay the impossible. Apart from all else, the very fact that its beliefs form the background of all one's own thought makes it difficult to present its story fairly. Neither dare one trespass into the domain of its theology nor into that of ecclesiastical controversy. The record of the Christian Church is humanity's most shameful yet most beautiful story. It has produced men trembling on the verge of divinity such as Francis of Assisi or John Woolman, and villains whose machinations in the pursuit of power politics made

them the embodiment of cruelty ; it has furnished the world with its greatest intellects, such as Thomas Aquinas or Abelard, and changed it through the simple goodness and faith of unlettered men. The fires of the Inquisition and the lamp of Florence Nightingale have alike been lighted at its flame ; the sword of Simon de Montford laying waste a whole countryside, and the service of Father Damien giving his life for the lepers were equally its product.

Behind it all stands the example and teaching of its Founder : the most beautiful story in the world.

Of that life we know too much yet not enough. The noblest minds of the race have been drawn back to it. The Church again and again has tried to reform herself by turning back to that divine beginning. Men have continually striven, continually failed, to mould their lives to that pattern. Society has conceived its noblest institutions in terms of that inspiration. Democracy is Christian ethics applied to politics ; communism, Christian teaching applied to economics ; liberty, Christian belief applied to thought. If we accept the secularist theory that Jesus of Nazareth was merely born a man among men, the coming of Christianity is as miraculous as any story of virgin birth and herald angels. If, with modern scepticism, we deny the resurrection, we have yet to account for the marvel which caused a tiny body of terror-stricken disciples, simple and ignorant men as they were, powerless and utterly defeated by Church and State, to start a religion which spread like wildfire through the world. If we doubt that Saul of Tarsus saw a vision of the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, we have to explain what turned that tremendous personality and trained intellect suddenly into the Apostle Paul. Agnosticism demands more miracles than faith.

Shirking the more difficult of these issues, therefore, one can record the facts so far as we know them ; and still we are faced with a series of amazing events and inspired lives which ultimately build up into the pattern that underlies European civilisation and so shapes the contemporary world. One school of thought claims that the interpretation of all history is materialistic ; as we view the story of Christianity it seems more true to say that the explanation of history is spiritual. St. Mark's Gospel has meant more to mankind than Karl Marx's *Capital*.

The life-story of Jesus,¹ treated in its simplest human aspect and shorn of legend, is a typical record of a reformer of a local religion. Born in an obscure Roman colony at the time of the Emperor Augustus, he was brought up as a typical son in a craftsman's household, learning his father's craft and strictly observing the religious ritual of his people. At the age of thirty, his passion for the pure life of the spirit caused him to accept the ritual of baptism from a fanatical hermit-preacher, and then himself to go away into the desert to meditate. With this intensification of his own inner life he felt the urge to start a campaign, calling upon his fellow-countrymen to repent their personal sins, and attacking the decadent and hide-bound Jewish Church which had lost so much of the fire of the ancient prophets in its concern for textual accuracy and exact observance of ritual law. The perfect goodness of the personal life of Jesus attracted multitudes of people to him, particularly the simple folk, and from those he chose twelve men who left their normal occupations and shared his life as a wandering preacher. His power of presenting spiritual thought in the shape of vividly dramatic stories, the appeal of his simple call to the good life, his daring new interpretation of the old Jewish hope of a Messiah and the restoration of the kingdom, his insistence on the Fatherhood of God and therefore on the Brotherhood of Man, and his deep understanding of, and refusal to condemn, ordinary worldly sins while he inveighed fiercely against the spiritual sins of hypocrisy and hardness of heart : these things made him a power in his remote corner of the Roman Empire. Added to them he is recorded to have had healing power over disease which gave him the reputation of a miracle-worker.

This popularity, combined with his attacks upon the ritualists, invoked the enmity of the two great Jewish church parties, especially as they feared that his utterances would bring the Jews again into conflict with the Roman authorities. They arrested him and demanded of the Roman governor that he should be executed, and to this demand the governor reluctantly acceded. So Jesus of Nazareth died the cruel and shameful death of crucifixion when he was about thirty-four years old, and his disciples denied and deserted him, going into hiding.

¹ For the purpose of this chapter, treating Christianity merely as history, Jesus is regarded in his human aspect apart from the question of his divinity.

Apparently he and his campaign of reform were utterly defeated, but—and here we are torn between history and the miraculous—this broken and hopeless little group of men and women were convinced that he rose again from the dead, appeared and spoke to many of them, and after a time was transported to the skies before their eyes. Though some may deny this as superstition a dynamic faith sprang into being, challenging again the world and the Jewish church. The disciples met in each other's houses and observed a mystic ritual initiated by Jesus just before his arrest, a ceremony of breaking bread and drinking wine in memory of him. The Jewish church party again attacked the cult, led by a brilliant young Greek-educated Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. Again we have to face the assertion of the miraculous as the only explanation of an enormous fact. Saul, on his way to Damascus to initiate fresh persecutions against these people, had a vision of Jesus and heard a voice which caused him immediately and absolutely to go over to their side. Saul the persecutor became Paul the Apostle and the greatest force in the early Christian Church, which was, anyway, establishing itself widely in the Eastern Mediterranean world.

We learn much of this from Paul's own brilliant letters to the various groups of the faithful in Rome, at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Galatea and elsewhere, with similar letters from James, Peter and other apostles. These were the first definite writings of this new sect of the Jewish church (for at the beginning this was all that these people claimed to be). Probably there were also certain written records of the sayings of Jesus as the first disciples remembered them. Then, about fifty years after the crucifixion, John-Mark, the associate of Peter, made a short memoir of the facts of the life of Jesus, including some of his sayings and parables. It is an eye-witness account, very simple and quite brief. Next Matthew wrote his record, using Mark's memoir and some further collection of sayings and parables. There is much more of the miraculous, of supernaturalism, dreams and claims associating Jesus with the promised Messiah of Jewish tradition. The third Gospel was written by a scholarly Greek physician, Luke, the companion of Paul. It has been called "the most beautiful book in the world," and reveals Jesus as the poetic speaker in parables and the saint with power of healing. Standing apart from these three interrelated records of the life there appeared

much later the mystical Gospel of John. In it Jesus is shown as the violent antagonist of the Jewish faith ; his claims to absolute divinity are stressed, his miracles are symbolic. The whole presentation is that of a mystic with a doctrine to teach. It is subjective and emotional rather than historical and factual. It was probably written just before A.D. 100 when John died.

Meanwhile the people of Antioch had derisively called the new sect "Christians"; and the name, like so many given in derision, was accepted in joy.

The Church in each city was organised under a presbyter or bishop who conducted the meetings, aided by deacons who dealt with other affairs, not least with almsgiving to the poorer brethren. At first there had been experiments in voluntary communism, but these had not proved entirely successful. In the first seventy years after the crucifixion the new religion took its decisive turn from being merely the reforming sect of a local religion to a faith which was destined to move the world. That was the work of Paul, and was the first great tussle inside the Church. The whole essence of Judaism was to keep the Jewish people intact in the midst of their enemies by a strict observance of the ritual of their religion, such as circumcision and the passover. When Paul began to draw into the new faith Greeks and Romans, there arose an immediate clash between those who saw the Church as an expanding faith and the more narrow Judaist reformers. There can be little doubt that although Jesus had himself at first seen his teachings only in terms of a reformed Judaism, he would have subscribed to the Pauline ideal. Christianity was, anyway, too dynamic to be held within Judaism. The doctrine of universal brotherhood which made the bondsman equal with his master, gave women a new dignity and status, and yielded a new hope to the world, could not end as a mere question of the rightful reading of the Jewish sacred books.

The age was ripe for such a faith. Rome had created the outward body of civilisation ; Greece had provided the mental background and language ; and Christianity came as a new spirit. Sometimes Rome, in fear of the spreading faith which would not yield homage to the self-avowed divinity of the Emperors, turned upon the Christians and slaughtered them indiscriminately with the Jews, who were also monotheistic and would not put their pinch of incense on the

pagan altars. Thus under Nero, in A.D. 64, Peter and Paul, the two greatest apostles, were martyred in Rome. Such violent persecutions went on all through the first three centuries, but sometimes for long periods Rome included the faith in her almost universal tolerance. In the darkest periods the Christians lived and worshipped, died and were buried in the vast catacombs under the city of Rome itself; and it speaks for the enormous spread of the faith that something like four million Christians are assumed to be buried there.

Gradually Rome itself became the accepted centre of the Church, with the tradition that Peter was the first bishop; and when eventually the Roman Empire split and its political centre removed to Byzantium the power invested in the Christian Bishop of Rome became immensely increased. But already, in the year A.D. 313, Constantine the Great had granted complete toleration to the Christian religion by the Edict of Milan. Whether he himself was baptized as a Christian or not, he recognised the enormous value of the faith as a unifying force in his Empire and, worried by the dissensions among the Christians (especially concerning the degree of the divinity of Christ), he called a great Council at Nice where the matter was officially settled. The Nicene Creed, which declares that Jesus is "very God of Very God, begotten not made, being one of substance with the Father," was the result of that Council, and if it were not final—for Constantine himself changed his mind on the subject several times and had periods when he favoured the heretical Arius who stood for the contrary opinion—it at least clarified the issue.

The next great period of the Church stretches from that date of its full acceptance as the state religion of the Roman Empire to the time of Pope Gregory the Great, A.D. 590. It is marked by three outstanding things: the rise to absolute power of the bishops of Rome; the establishment of monasticism; and the settlement of the accepted doctrines. Thus during this period Christianity is no longer fundamentally a new spiritual-ethical system as Jesus conceived, but a great ecclesiastical organisation which took over the salvaging of civilisation when the Roman Empire collapsed.

The rise of the Popes began with the removal of the Emperors of Rome to Byzantium. This left the Western Empire virtually under the government of the reigning Pope, and many of these men

were tremendous personalities. On two occasions, when the Goths and the Huns were besieging Rome, it was the Pope who confronted them and literally ordered them away. Such incidents gave the Popes great secular power, besides their acceptance as head of the Church based on the tradition that Peter was the first Roman bishop and that Jesus had said : "On this rock will I build my Church." There was, it is true, a continual tussle with the reigning Emperors and with the Patriarchs of the Church who were the Bishops at Byzantium, and gradually the Eastern and Western Churches drifted apart on questions of doctrine, such as the rightful time for observing Easter.

The coming of monasticism forms another important part of the history of Christianity. It first arose because individual Christians fled to the Egyptian desert to escape the persecution of the Romans, and gathered there naturally into little communities living a life of Christian meditation and mutual service. But when, during the fourth century, the Church had ceased to be persecuted and was herself busy hunting heretics while the power politics of triumphant ecclesiasticism ruled much of her policy, many saintly men turned away from the pomp and circumstance of her great centres and tried to get back to the simple life and teaching of the early Christianity by living in remote places. It is important to realise that monasticism was at first a heresy : many of the monks, like St. Anthony, were protestants against the ritual of the Church and never observed it. Monks were mobbed and beaten if they appeared in the Christian cities. This way of life, however, had a strange fascination for certain types of mind and soon became too deep-seated to be outcast by the Church. A certain Pachomius at the beginning of the fourth century established the first conscious monastic settlement on Tabenna, an island of the Nile. The individual cells, the community refectory for meals, the church for communal worship and the necessary workshops, all under the government of a prior, became the model for monasteries. Fifty years after his death there were more than fifty thousand monks. The monasteries grew in power and in service to mankind as the Roman Empire decayed, and ultimately they were the centres in which culture and some protective civilisation survived the dark years. St. Basil started a similar movement in the Eastern Church. Then, in the sixth century, that great reforming spirit

St. Benedict recognised the monastic system, imposing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience on his followers. Despite its inevitable faults the magnificent work of monasticism, during the first thousand years of its history at least, deserves the deep gratitude of mankind.

The third aspect of the Christian Church during this period was the settlement of her doctrines. The controversies were endless, and the whole bitter story of heresy-hunting shameful. The chief struggle, that with Arius the Bishop of Alexandria, raged around the question of the degree and kind of divinity of Jesus. Other quarrels tore the expanding Church : did the sin of Adam concern only himself or condemn all mankind ; did mankind have free will or was the individual soul predestined to grace or damnation ; were the wafer and the wine really the body and blood of Christ by the mystery of transubstantiation or merely a symbol ; should sacred images and pictures be put into churches ; was Mary also virgin born and divine ? Councils of the whole Church were sometimes called to decide these matters once and for all, and often resulted only in a widespread breakaway of some heretical sect who forthwith became subject to excommunication and persecution.

These questions still cause the divisions in the Church. Each has a long history of its own, often with brilliant minds opposed on either side, with terrible and magnificent martyrdoms, sometimes of absolute wars in which thousands perished and whole districts were laid waste. On some of them the Church of Rome has only recently given her ruling. The question of the divinity of Mary, for instance, was not raised at first. In the third century, stories of her own virgin birth arose. At a Council held at Ephesus in 431, largely to deal with the question of the divinity of Jesus again, a word slipped into the decision which gave Mary sanctity also. In the sixth century, feasts began to be celebrated by the Church in her honour. The doctrine of her Immaculate Conception came into favour in the twelfth century, and a feast was ordered to be observed for it by an eighteenth-century Pope. But it was not until 1855 that the Roman Catholic Church made it an article of faith to which all Catholics must subscribe. Similarly the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope on all spiritual matters was not made a binding article of faith until 1870. The inner history of the Church is one of amazing antagonisms on such

matters, and the shifting pattern of the political world has often been created by these ecclesiastical schisms.

One of the greatest of these was the quarrel over the use of images in churches, for it eventually broke the Christian Church into a definite Eastern and Western, the so-called Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. In the eighth century this controversy raged. Sometimes images were condemned by Pope and Emperor, but always the urge for them from the common people brought the question up again. Finally, in 787 a Council at Nicæa approved of images, but by this time the Eastern Church was emphatic in their condemnation and practically broke away on this issue. Ostensibly, however, they broke upon the subsequent theological question as to whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father only or from the Father and the Son, when a Council at Toledo inserted the words "and Son" into the Nicene Creed in 1054. Since then the Eastern Church has gone its own way as the Holy Oriental Orthodox Apostolic Church, and has dominated Russia, Turkey, Asia Minor, Greece and much of the Balkans. Its centre is at Constantinople and its government is by a number of its Patriarchs, for it recognises no Vicar of Christ on Earth as the Roman Catholics do. The inclusion of statues in its churches remains forbidden, but sacred pictures, "icons," are allowed. Its monastic system is based on the methods of St. Basil.

The break on the question of images had far-reaching consequences. Italy left the Eastern Empire, the power of the Papacy was greatly increased, and Charlemagne, crowned rather trickily by the Pope, became Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire with sway right across Europe. His father, Pepin, had already given to the Papacy the state of Ravenna, so that the Popes were both temporal and spiritual lords. For two centuries the Papacy remained at this zenith of its power, although during those years there was a continual struggle between them and successive Emperors. But the flowing tide of all that we mean by the Renaissance was sapping the power of the Popes as it secularised the world, strengthened nationalism and gave many that pride of intellect which would not accept the ruling of the Church even in spiritual affairs.

In the story of Christianity that phase of the Renaissance is called the Reformation. It has to be realised that it began inside the Church.

Dominic and Francis, inaugurating their reformed monastic orders, enormously influenced our outlook on mind and on nature ; Dante, siding with the Emperors against the Pope, was nevertheless a great churchman ; Roger Bacon, beginning the study of science by natural experiments, was a monk ; Abelard and Aquinas, the two greatest intellects of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were theologians who preached the need of bringing human reason to bear on their studies ; Petrarch was an ordained priest ; even the most rebellious, Wycliffe of England, Hus of Bohemia, and Luther of Germany, were priests whose desire was to reform the Mother Church.

The basic claim in all this revolt was that men should use their own minds to consider spiritual things, whereas the Church held that such wisdom was her prerogative. The secular claim was enormously strengthened when the discovery of printing in 1440 made the possession of books so much more widely spread. The Bible was the first book printed, and men went to this fountain-head of Christian teaching and early Church history for their inspiration. Wycliffe had already translated the Bible into English as part of his campaign for purifying ecclesiastical practices, and from this time dates the period of the great translations of the sacred book of Christianity which had so vast an influence in turning the faith back to its divine source. Wycliffe's teaching, though denounced by the Church, had not so revolutionary an effect in his own hands as it did in those of his disciple Jan Hus, whose heresy brought him to the stake.

It was with Martin Luther, a German, however, that "Protestantism," as it was called, came to its climax. About the year 1,500 a Dominican monk visited Wittenberg selling indulgences to raise money for building St. Peter's at Rome. Luther pinned a document of ninety-five points against this practice of selling indulgences to the door of the church, and within a fortnight his protest had been spread throughout Germany. The declaration was immediately condemned as heresy, and he was summoned to Rome but refused to obey. Thereupon he was excommunicated, but burnt the Pope's order for his excommunication. Then the Emperor was ordered to bring him to trial, but, seizing his opportunity to state his case against the Church and to claim the right of every man to

Christianity : God as Love

approach directly to God in prayer, he appeared before the Diet at Worms. He had an enormous following, and the report that he had been killed caused an immense wave of popular fury. Luther, with his great power of leadership, took over the championship of this popular cause of religious freedom, and Protestantism became the greatest schism the Roman Church had known. It is a dangerous doctrine that individual men not of the priestly class may make their own interpretation of Christian doctrine and the will and purpose of God, for inevitably it leads to the breaking up of the Church into numerous sects, but it was a phase of the evolution of Christianity which was bound to come.

Luther attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation at the Mass, the worship of Mary and the saints, beliefs in purgatory and penance. Other men followed his lead, and although there was immediate disagreement as to what were the true beliefs of Christianity, after a conference at Marburg in 1530 two basically Protestant churches held sway, the Lutheran and the Reformed Church. The Lutheran Church, retaining most of the old ritual and ceremonies but conducting its services in the vernacular, became the established church of Germany and the Scandinavian countries.

Protestantism found its next great champion in Calvin, a Frenchman born in 1509, who left the Catholic Church and deliberately decided to work for the Reformation. He settled in Geneva and from there he carried on his campaign for strict personal righteousness. For a time the terrifying strictness caused strong feeling against this Calvinist party, but ultimately he won, and devoted his life to the college of pastors who were to preach the new doctrine, and to the enforcement of his rigid scheme of moral life. The main point of his theology was that God had predestined certain souls to be saved and others to damnation. It was, indeed, a terrible and joyless doctrine, and as it spread in various forms—to Scotland under John Knox, to England and subsequently to America with the Puritans—it created a strange distrust of all the normal joys of life. All forms of sensuous enjoyment were suspect, so that art and sex were almost taboo.

Meantime Protestantism in England had taken a curious form, a kind of compromise with the Catholic Church. In a way it arose from a revival of the old quarrel between King and Pope which had

became a living force in the daily lives of the people, a tremendous power for righteous living. As in the earliest days of the religion there was less question of doctrine than of the good life. The repercussions of that revival were enormous. Almost every kind of social reform became the direct concern of Christian people and the Christian churches. Drink, gambling, immorality, dishonesty ; slavery, sweated labour, the employment of children, the treatment of the sick, the poor, lunatics, prisoners : every phase of life was reformed in the name of religion, which had definitely become a social force. It is not too much to say that modern social legislation has its roots in the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century.

The other world-shaking marvel of this period was the expansion of the missionary idea. The Catholic Church, and particularly the Jesuits, had always "gone into the world to preach the gospel" ; the Church of England had already its Society for the Propagation of the Gospel ; but the genius of William Carey, the Baptist cobbler and schoolmaster, stirred the Christians of his own and other denominations to a vast outburst of missionary activity which has grown ever since. Christian missionaries, such as Livingstone, have often been the first explorers, and have carried European civilisation throughout the world.

Thus the pattern of Christianity as we know it to-day came into being, with three great divisions : the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the manifold Protestant Churches. With widening toleration the movement to-day is broadly towards unity and working together, and in the mission-field of accepting the spiritual truths of the other great religious systems so far as that is possible. Christianity remains the keystone of world civilisation. That civilisation has throughout the centuries gone hand in hand with this teaching of the Divine Man who nearly two thousand years ago in the towns and villages of Judea preached to a few simple men and women his doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the consequent Brotherhood of Man.



The Wisdom of Jesus

"God is Love"



When ye pray say : 'Our Father .

WORLD WITHOUT END

"**G**OD is at the end of evolution, not at the beginning." So says a philosopher of our own time, and there is a deep truth in the saying. From century to century in every land the search for God has continued. Again and again the master-spirits have caught some glimpse of the eternal amid the mists of time. Whenever this has happened a new revelation has drawn men. The Ark of the Covenant, the sacred lotus of the East, the Tao-te-Ching, the Cross of Christ, the Koran : the symbols are many, the paths along which men have travelled are many. Dreadful things have happened on that manifold pilgrimage, for men have taken religion more seriously than anything else, and therefore more blood has been shed, more hatred engendered, more misery caused for its sake than for any other. But the search for God has continued. Men have glimpsed, but seldom yet have found Him.

Often some saint or mystic has succeeded in revealing his vision to others for a time, and then it has been blurred as his disciples imposed upon it the old false standards. St. Francis, the little brother of poverty, who perhaps of all men came nearest to knowing God and living the good life, lies coffined in gold : Brother Elias brought his vision to earth, and the mists closed in again. Zoroaster and Lao-Tze, who preached against polytheism, are themselves deified by their followers. Churches have invariably betrayed their founders, have modified the teachings so much that the spiritual impulse has been lost. Visionaries who have set out to reform the Church of their own day have succeeded only in founding yet another church which eventually called for reform.

Authoritarian priests, authoritarian books, authoritarian creeds and doctrines have clamped down on the free and expanding spirit of man. The Almighty Infinite Power behind the Universe, which in the very nature of things cannot be conceived by the limited mind of man, has throughout the ages been defined as this or that. The greatest conceptions have been the most vague, appealing to some-

thing within us which lies beyond the reach of the logical mind. But the saints and mystics have known in ecstatic moments this inner experience which transcends mere words.

Meantime, Man, the highest and most complex creation of evolution, has turned his instruments of mind and hand to dominate the material of the earth. In an ever swifter movement he has established his dominion. Physicists have split the atom ; astronomers measured the universe in light years ; mechanicians have conquered the air, the earth, the sea, and the waters under the sea ; scientists have attained exact knowledge of all creatures, all plants, all material. Sometimes in his arrogance Man has said, "I know all." But immediately his questing mind has shown that beyond all ends there is another beginning.

With this very advance of knowledge has gone a destructiveness which now threatens Man himself. He, too, as a species, may die amid his terrible armour, as the plated dinosaurs died ; may fail, despite his swift and awful weapons, as the sabre-toothed tiger failed ; may disappear, for all his greatness, as the vast brontosaurus disappeared. For the law of life holds true : find and pursue the true way, or die.

It may well be, as some believe, that the time has come when Life, which has functioned so marvellously in the body and mind of Man, must have the courage to pass beyond these, and that Man himself must start a new spiritual growth, as the amphibians three hundred million years ago dared to leave their existence as water creatures and struggled painfully on to the land. It may well be that the whole purpose and meaning of life is that the material should thus find its way onward to the spiritual, that Man should conquer his appetites, his fear, his pride, his self-seeking, and should press forward in the endless quest. All religions have been part of that quest. However confused, however faithless to their own highest, however mistaken in their dual aspect of spiritual thought and the good life, the faiths of the world have been the fumbling efforts of the creature to find the Creator, the all-too-human guides along the way to God.

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